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SHAKESPEARE AND
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etc.

SHAKESPEARE AND HOME LIFE

by

CUMBERLAND CLARK

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P R E F A C E

MANY enthusiasts, who know and love the plays of Shakespeare, feel the urge to learn more of the poet and his times. A wider knowledge of the conditions of the home life and environment of his characters would, they rightly think, add to their appreciation and understanding of the finest dramatic masterpieces ever written.

These Shakespeare lovers are confronted with the difficulty that most books on the poet are deeply learned commentaries which appeal more to the scholar than the student and interest the professor more than the inquiring layman. Such weighty tomes presume an already extensive knowledge of the literature of the subject.

The present volume has a different aim. It is intended for those who know the plays, the more popular plays at least, and would fill in the details of the background against which Shakespeare's characters appear. Profound theories and unsolved perplexities are not discussed. Fine writing is not attempted. Quotations from contemporary writers are not left in their archaic spelling, but transcribed. No expedient tending to make the book more readable and entertaining has been ignored.

The following pages describe Shakespeare's characters and contemporaries at home—their houses, furniture, gardens, servants, meals, home duties, entertainment

customs, and dress. The author hopes they will do a service to Shakespeare among those of his admirers who know something about him and are ambitious to know more.

CUMBERLAND CLARK

LONDON 1935

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SHAKESPEARE AND HOME LIFE

CHAPTER I

ELIZABETHAN HOUSES

Most people are interested in the way other people live, but they are so preoccupied with the cares and struggles of their own lives that they have neither time nor opportunity to make their own discoveries. The majority of us are astonishingly ignorant of the ways of life even of our contemporaries; and as for the hopes, fears, activities, and recreations of men and women of a past generation, we know no more than the history books tell us. History, however, confines itself principally to events and characters of public importance and does not penetrate into the homes of the common people. It is there, nevertheless, that the tragedies and comedies occur which strike the most sympathetic chords in our own emotions and shed most light on that human nature which we all share.

The novelist conceives it his task to carry us through the fortifications of reserve and reticence with which most people, particularly English people, surround themselves, and to show us the intimate joys and sorrows, loves and hates, aspirations and disappointments of the everyday folk with whom we are able to identify ourselves. The investigation of private lives has proved so instructive and diverting a study that

to-day biography is one of the most popular branches of literature. But published biography deals necessarily with figures of some consequence; and we do not feel we can fairly compare their successes and failures with our own.

The dramatist has the advantage over both novelist and biographer. He can actually lift the curtain on the home lives of his characters—characters which are not pen pictures needing mental processes to translate them into realities, nor remarkable personalities resuscitated from dusty historical data, but ordinary humdrum men and women brought to life before our eyes and moving in surroundings we can actually see and recognize.

The age in which the greatest of our dramatists lived happened to be one of the most fascinating in our country's history. We are all well grounded in the wars, plots, controversies, colonizing, explorations, and artistic contributions of the reign of the great Queen Elizabeth. We have admired the achievements of the Cecils, the Drakes, the Spencers, of that epoch and have traced the fruits of their public work and the sense of a great racial destiny which gave them their opportunity. But it is to the home life of the various classes of Shakespeare's contemporaries that we now direct attention, following them into those corners where the limelight of history books does not penetrate. Shakespeare as a topical dramatist and a keen observer is, we shall find, a great help to us here; and, to look at the other side of the picture, we shall glean knowledge which will illumine parts of Shakespeare's work which hitherto we may have passed over without

an appreciation of their humanitarian interest and importance.

Before we can peep into the homes of Shakespeare's contemporaries and gain some idea of how they passed their lives, we must construct a mental picture of their houses, from the royal palace to the humble peasant cottage. As it happens, the Tudor period witnessed greater changes in the field of domestic architecture than any other in our annals. Every age has its own contribution of new ideas to make to the science of building and construction, but it was the exceptional influences at work which caused the Tudor changes to be so revolutionary.

The chief of these influences was political. Until the advent of the Tudor dynasty, which at last gave the country a monarch whom all could serve with a clear conscience, the land was torn by faction. Even when the king was unchallenged by a rival, the feudal lord had to maintain himself against his enemies by his own power. Castles and houses were, therefore, constructed with one primal consideration—defence. All other considerations were entirely subordinate. Spacious keeps with sanded floors and bare stone walls were the characteristics of the homes of the mighty. The accommodation of soldiers, not the intimacies of family life, was the overriding purpose of the noble's seat. Everything was sacrificed to that purpose. The construction of a house round an inner courtyard was dictated by it. Doors and windows, weak spots in the solid phalanxes of stone, were placed where they would prove least vulnerable. Windows did not look out over the country, letting in more of the sunlight and providing extensive

views of the landscape. In that position they would have been targets for the archers. Windows, therefore, looked inwards on to the courtyard. Doors were no larger than was absolutely necessary, and were heavily strengthened and guarded. The interior of a building consisted mainly of one great hall, and smaller rooms were few, in number. Fear of attack controlled all architectural planning.

With the end of internal conflict and the union of the nation under Henry VII, the great houses of the land were released from this paralysing restriction. Defence was no longer the dominant motive in building. Beauty and comfort began to come into their own. Wolsey led the way with his magnificent residence of Hampton Court. Henry VIII commenced the splendid palace of Nonsuch in Surrey, which was not completed until after his death. This new freedom was eagerly extended by the Elizabethans, who found themselves in the happy position of being able to plan their houses without any thought but their own comfort and convenience and in possession of the wealth necessary to carry out their luxurious designs.

Just at the time when Englishmen found they could build for themselves gorgeous palaces instead of grim fortresses, architectural influences from Renaissance Italy began to percolate native ideas. These influences came mostly through French, Dutch, and Flemish channels, though some Italian artificers found their way to England. Young Englishmen of the upper classes were, also, completing their education in foreign travel, and most of them made for Italy, "nursery of the arts." They returned with an appreciation of architectural

beauty strongly developed and a fund of ideas amassed by their own observation. Moreover, professional designers—Inigo Jones, for example—went to Italy with the special intention of studying closely foreign methods, tastes, and tendencies. By the time Shakespeare came on the scene, the English people generally had advanced their architectural knowledge and artistic appreciation far beyond the crude native conceptions, and the proper location and requirements for a comfortable and attractive residence were understood by most people of rank and learning. Bacon, for instance, in his forty-fifth essay, the subject of which was building, wrote: “He that builds a fair house upon an ill seat, committeth himself to prison . . . want of water; want of wood, shade, and shelter; want of fruitfulness, and mixture of grounds of several natures; want of prospect; want of level grounds; want of places at some near distance for sports of hunting, hawking, and races; too near the sea, too remote; having the commodity of navigable rivers, or the discommodity of their overflowing; too far off from great cities, which may hinder business; or too near them, which lurcheth all provisions, and maketh everything dear; where a man hath a great living laid together, and where he is scanted; all which, as it is impossible perhaps to find together, so it is good to know them and think of them, that a man may take as many as he can.” No mention, it will be noted, of defence. By the time this essay was published (1625), the fortress-home was a thing of the past and did not concern contemporary builders.

Shakespeare had an understanding of the essentials of house-building equal to that of his great contemporary.

The following quotation comes from the Second Part of *Henry IV*:¹

When we mean to build,
 We first survey the plot, then draw the model;
 And when we see the figure of the house,
 Then must we rate the cost of the erection;
 • Which if we find outweighs ability,
 What do we then but draw anew the model
 In fewer offices, or at least desist
 To build at all? Much more, in this great work,
 Which is almost to pluck a kingdom down
 And set another up, should we survey
 The plot of situation and the model,
 Consent upon a sure foundation,
 Question surveyors; . . .
 • or else,
 We fortify in paper and in figures,
 Using the names of men instead of men:
 Like one that draws the model of a house
 Beyond his power to build it; who, half through,
 Gives o'er and leaves his part-created cost
 A naked subject to the weeping clouds,
 And waste for churlish winter's tyranny.

The foregoing extracts give some idea of the importance domestic building had assumed in Elizabethan life. There was little other building of note. Except for a few isolated cases of public construction, the most important being the Royal Exchange erected by Sir Thomas Gresham, the builders of Shakespeare's day concentrated on private houses. Church-building had practically ceased, but fine country houses such as Sir Christopher Hatton's Holdenby House in Northamptonshire and Lord Burghley's Theobalds in Hertford-

¹ 1. iii. 41-53, 55-62.

shire, manor-houses on a smaller scale built by the squires, and the unpretentious farmsteads of the yeomen and cottages of the peasants, were springing up in every town and village throughout the length and breadth of the land. Many of these Tudor houses still exist, and Shakespeare's own town of Stratford-on-Avon contains several fine examples; but more have fallen into ruin or disappeared altogether. Intense building activity was witnessed in London as in the country; so much so, that the rapid increase of the smaller tenements in the suburbs alarmed the rulers, who saw danger in a large and unwieldy city. Drastic steps were taken to check the expansion of the capital and restrict severely the enterprise of the builders. ✓

Travellers and students returning from Italy might bring back fresh ideas on house-building, but it was another thing to persuade the English artisans and labourers to use them. The workers harboured the insular prejudice towards anything foreign and unfamiliar, and only adopted the new methods and improvements partially and with reluctance. The result was that, while there was considerable advance from the old principles, the Italian influences were never wholly obeyed, and a style that was a mixture of the two, with very definite English characteristics, emerged.

A word about labour organizations. Companies of workers were growing out of the old craft guilds. In Chester, for instance, there was one company of wrights, carpenters, slaters, and sawyers, and another of joiners, turners, and carvers. At Hull the bricklayers were united with the tilers, wallers, plasterers, and paviours. These companies contained small contractors, indepen-

dent masters, and journeymen; but the master-craftsman had become a tradesman who supplied building materials of all kinds for the job for which he had contracted.

In many cases masons were responsible for their own detail. Sometimes they appear to have received verbal instructions from the designers, and in a few instances they worked undoubtedly from a model. But, as a whole, Italian influences on detail and decoration appear to have waged a far from successful battle with the well-grounded English tradition.

In one direction, however, Italy made a profound impression. In English medieval building the arrangement of rooms was haphazard, with the result that an untidy, straggling effect was produced in the finished mansion. Windows were placed anywhere convenient, the paramount consideration being safety from attack. Chimneys and turrets appeared to have been sprinkled anyhow over the top, and doors were pushed into obscure and irregular corners. In the new building the keynote was symmetry. A compact and balanced effect was aimed at. Rooms were arranged with great ingenuity to fit into a pleasing and satisfying design. Doors and windows were considered, not only from the utilitarian point of view, but for their external appearance. Chimneys were arranged to give an impression of orderly grouping. Domestic architecture, in short, had come into its own.

For much of our knowledge of the country of Shakespeare's youth we are indebted to William Harrison, whose *Description of England* is the work of a careful observer of all phases of Elizabethan life, enriched by caustic comment and searching humour. Harrison had an educated architectural taste, and could

admire such specimens of the builder's art as the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster. He has much to say on domestic building generally, and we shall refer to him frequently for enlightenment on important points.

Speaking comprehensively, Harrison notes the more permanent materials of which men were building their houses. Red brick and stone had superseded the timber which had been so plentifully used before his time—a change that was later enforced by law.' Where timber was used, mostly for interior construction and decoration, oak, hitherto reserved for churches and palaces, supplanted elm, willow, and other inferior woods. It seems almost as if men realized that they had emerged from a system which had outlived its purpose and usefulness, and were now laying the foundations of a new world order in which their part would be remembered. And as we look round the magnificent monuments to the originality and foresight of the Elizabethans, monuments which are still with us, we cannot but acknowledge that their faith in themselves was justified.

Before describing the common arrangement of the rooms in the Elizabethan house, a few of the general features must be touched upon, and a useful beginning may be made with windows. Now that they were no longer regarded as danger spots in a system of defence, men's attitude towards them underwent a complete change. They were not only considered as vehicles for lighting an interior, but as providing charming vistas from the living-rooms and adding to the external beauty of the mansion. Windows, therefore, not only changed their position, looking outwards over the countryside instead of inwards on to a court, but they increased in

size and number. Moreover, as Harrison reports, clear glass was now plentiful and easily obtained, so that "each one that may will have it for his building." In the previous century windows had been left unglazed and filled in with wooden lattices or sheets of horn; but, as J. Alfred Gotch tells us,¹ "in Elizabeth's time the stonework of the windows is always found to be grooved for glass."

In Bacon's opinion this window business was rather overdone by the builders, and in his *Essay on Building* he complains, "You shall have sometimes fair houses so full of glass, that one cannot tell where to become to be out of the sun, or cold."

Shakespeare in his frequent references to windows mentions all kinds. His common use of the word "casement" in alluding to the windows in Shylock's, Dr. Caius', Theseus', and other dwellings reveals the popular design. The window of lattice is mentioned in *All's Well that Ends Well*;² and Romeo, we learn, when he shuts up his window, "locks fair daylight out, And makes himself an artificial night."³ Perhaps the dramatist's most interesting reference to windows is that which occurs in *Twelfth Night*, in the scene where Feste, Maria, and Sir Toby Belch are baiting the unhappy Malvolio, who has been imprisoned on suspicion of insanity. The steward complains that his cell is hideously dark, but Feste teases him with, "Why, it hath bay windows transparent as barricadoes, and the clearstories towards the south north are as lustrous as ebony."⁴

Bay windows were a new device introduced both to

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 64.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 1. 145-6.

² II. III. 225.

⁴ IV. II. 40-2.



HOUSE FRONT

(From Sir Paul Pindar Tavern, 1600)

give more light and to add dignity to the appearance of a mansion as a whole. Clearstories were originally lofty church windows and then "any kind of large window high up in the wall of a hall or great chamber."¹ The great hall, or principal room in a mansion, often had one or more magnificent windows, sometimes at some height from the ground, sometimes stretching almost from floor to ceiling. When architectural design began to receive serious notice from the builders, the fine window of the great hall would be balanced by another, which lighted a room no more important than the buttery, or, perhaps, served more than one story. Such an arrangement showed how far the English had progressed towards an appreciation of symmetry taught them by their Italian masters.

Large houses were approached through an extensive courtyard surrounded by an imposing wall. In this wall was the gatehouse, a structure containing the entrance gates with the porter's rooms above, from which any visitors could be seen afar off. It was in such gatehouses, often ennobled with lofty turrets and fine oriel windows, that the grumbling porter of Macbeth's castle and the porter and his man in the London palace yard in *Henry VIII* carried out their duties. Smaller houses which could boast no gatehouse contented themselves with an arched door which looked impressive as one approached it. Doors themselves, even in the larger mansions, were often on the small size. In olden days, as weak spots in defence, they would naturally be kept as small as possible, but it is strange to find in these Elizabethan mansions that persons on entering a room

¹ *The New Cambridge Shakespeare—Twelfth Night.*

were obliged to bend their heads. During his illness Lord Burghley, Elizabeth's Lord Treasurer, who built Cecil House in the Strand, and Burghley House, as well as the splendid Theobalds already mentioned, was visited by the Queen; and the "servants at the chamber-door desiring her to stoop, she generously answered, 'For your master's sake I will stoop, but not for the King of Spain's.'"¹

Roofing materials for the large mansions were tiles, slates, or thin stone slabs; while straw or thatch did duty for the humbler homes. Harrison notes particularly the great increase in the number of chimneys. Chimneys had been used for some hundreds of years previously, but now they became common to all classes of houses. From an order of the Stratford-on-Avon Council dated 1582 it seems that in some places citizens were ordered to build chimneys in tenements that were unprovided with them. This, no doubt, was in Shakespeare's mind when he made one of Jack Cade's followers support the leader's assertion that he was the son of a bricklayer with the declaration, "He made a chimney in my father's house, and the bricks are alive at this day to testify it."² It will be remembered, also, that in the inn yard at Rochester in the First Part of *Henry IV* one of the carriers tells the time by the position of the Great Bear in relation to the new chimney, apparently recently added to the inn.

But it was not only in the *number* of chimneys that the builders had advanced. Considerable attention was now paid to their grouping, so that, as in the case of

¹ Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. 1.

² *2 Henry VI*, IV. ii. 156-7.

the windows, a symmetrical effect might be obtained. Massive chimney stacks were, indeed, often added for no other reason than to enhance the architectural beauty of a mansion.

The increase in chimneys led naturally to the new trade of chimney-sweeping; and Shakespeare, quick to make a literary use of everything that came within his ken, causes Dumain to compare the complexion of Biron's dark lady Rosaline to that of chimney-sweeps.¹ And in *Cymbeline*, over the body of Imogen, supposedly dead, Guiderius and Arviragus sing sadly:

Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.²

Wells sunk in the grounds were the common source of water supply, but, contrary to popular supposition, plumbing was not unknown to the Elizabethans. In a survey taken in 1591, the manor-house of Moulsham in Kent, the seat of Sir Thomas Mildmay, Knight, is described as having "conveyance brought into the house, into each office, of very good wholesome spring water abundantly."

It is now time to describe the arrangement and purpose of the various rooms in the Elizabethan house. Let us imagine we are visiting the mansion of a wealthy subject of the great queen. We approach the imposing gatehouse from which the porter, through the windows of his room above the gates, has carefully watched our advance. After we have passed his scrutiny and obtained entrance, with, let us hope, less knocking and delay than fell to Macduff and Lennox at Macbeth's residence, we cross

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 266.

² *Cymbeline*, IV. ii. 262-3.

the extensive walled courtyard and make a comprehensive survey of the mansion before us. We look upon a magnificent and stately exterior, solid and symmetrical, and, in striking contrast to the forbidding blank walls of the medieval castle, endowed with a multiplicity of windows, including the immense windows of the great hall. •

We ascend some wide steps on to an open arcade—a feature copied from Italian models—and passing the stately, arched doorway, find ourselves in the principal wing of the mansion itself. The broad passage, into which the front door has brought us, is known as the “screens.” On the one side is the buttery hatch and the door leading to the kitchen premises: on the other side is the mighty oaken screen dividing us from the great hall. Using one of the doors in the screen, we enter the most important and imposing part of the Elizabethan mansion.

The great hall was the legacy of medieval building. In the old fortress-homes the vast central room comprised almost the whole building. There was a small room for the lord at one end, and a kitchen at the other, but for the rest, the whole household slept, ate, and lived in this one spacious apartment. In time the lord’s room became a suite of rooms, added in haphazard fashion, where the family of the master resided. At the same time the kitchen developed into more convenient offices and quarters for the retainers. The way in which this increase in the number of rooms was achieved produced a straggling, untidy-looking structure. The Elizabethans, we have seen, under Italian influences, ingeniously rearranged their rooms to give a symmetrical

beauty to their building. But the old ideas persisted to this extent that their mansions, almost always, consisted roughly of the three parts their ancestors had known. Most houses of note had the three sections. The main or central wing contained the great hall, with the butler's pantry, the larder, and passage to the kitchens at the lower end, and the entrance to the lord's apartments and often the main staircase at the upper end. The one side wing housed the family in a comfortable sequence of rooms; the other side wing accommodated the extensive household staff with their kitchens, bed-chambers, and living-rooms.

Continuing our tour, we shall probably look back at the mighty screen of the great hall, through which we have passed, and admire its magnificent carving and heraldic paintings and designs. Above our heads we note the "heavy roof-timbers crossing and recrossing each other in a kind of orderly confusion."¹ Midway up one of the side walls is the massive chimney-piece, enveloping an immense fireplace which could accept the trunk of a tree as fuel. Above the chimney-piece are the master's arms in carved mouldings with statues, figures, and mottoes. At the far end of the hall is the dais, on which the lord and his family take their meals. The great bay window gives a fine view over the grounds, but the other windows are high in the walls and above the heads of the occupants. This, it is said, is a relic of the time when windows were a danger and had to be so placed that an archer could not shoot the owner through them from outside. Heraldry adorns the windows, and gorgeous tapestries decorate the walls.

¹ J. A. Gotch in *Shakespeare's England*, II. 70.

The great hall was used for all ceremonious occasions. Banquets, the performance of plays, Twelfth Night revelry, and the like, would be held in this spacious apartment. We must visualize such a setting for the play scene in *Hamlet*, the reception of the Roman envoy in *Cymbeline*, the banquet in *Henry VIII*, and numerous other well-known incidents in the Shakespeare plays. Although the different and particular rooms, wherein scenes are meant to be played, are sometimes indicated in the stage directions, the dramatist gives few descriptive details in his dialogue. It is a pity from our point of view because his experience as a player brought him constantly into the great halls and great chambers of the palaces and mansions of the mighty. His own audience could fill in the details for themselves when he mentioned a particular room, but we must learn something of the Elizabethan home if we are to do likewise. One of the ways by which we can familiarize ourselves with the great hall of the Tudor mansion is by visiting Hampton Court. There we find a wonderful example of early sixteenth-century architecture and a hall, moreover, in which Shakespeare himself acted in plays of his own before each of the sovereigns under whom he lived.

From the great hall we pass to the wing containing the private apartments. Of these the parlour, or lord's room, is as ancient as the great hall itself, for houses had their parlours as early as the time of Chaucer. The parlour, if our mansion is early Tudor, will be entered through a low doorway and will be a small room, rather badly lighted. If it is late enough to have the new spacious Elizabethan windows, it will be bright and cheerful.

In addition to the parlour, once the lord's only opportunity of privacy, we shall find a new refinement in the shape of a dining-parlour. This was used for meals on informal occasions, when the great hall was not required. Another room with a newfangled name was the withdrawing room, nowadays called more simply the drawing-room, and used in much the same way as its name indicates. Bedchambers were numerous; and where the house belonged to a court favourite and the entertainment of the sovereign and her train had to be provided for, these bedrooms were arranged in suites to accommodate the maids-of-honour and the gentlemen-in-waiting and their servants. Shakespeare often lays his scene in these private apartments, indicating Gertrude's closet, Juliet's closet, Imogen's bedchamber, and many others. When we come to consider the furnishing of the Elizabethan house, we shall see how comfortable they managed to make themselves, with their fireplaces in nearly every room, their rich tapestries, their beautiful chairs and tables and bedsteads, and their rush-strewn floors. Sometimes Shakespeare allows his audience to fill in the details of the appointments of the various rooms from their own imagination. Sometimes, however, as in *Cymbeline*, the plot happily requires a detailed description of what a particular room contains. This adds to our pleasure and appreciation of a scene; and when we have a mental picture of the various rooms of a mansion of the day, we can supply the details in every case where the single word, "a room," "the closet," "a gallery," "a bedchamber," or "a hall," is all that is given us.

Elizabethan rooms led one out of the other and were

not commonly entered by doors leading from a passage serving them all. The multiplication of passages was a later development when growing refinement created a greater demand for privacy. A number of people, seeing the play of *Hamlet*, wonder what sort of "a room in the palace" it can be in which the king is sufficiently private to kneel down and pray while Hamlet is able to stroll through without so much as a warning knock. The room is probably the king's closet, containing a prie-dieu before which he kneels to ask forgiveness for a crime the gains whereof he has no intention of foregoing. Hamlet is on his way to his mother's closet, and in the absence of any corridor must pass through his uncle's room to get there. His intrusion, therefore, is natural enough and could occasion no surprise or remonstrance.

Mounting the main staircase, situated by the great hall in the main part of the building, we find that the upper floor of the wing containing the private apartments is taken up wholly by the long gallery. This is the most distinctive feature of the domestic architecture of the period. Apparently the gallery at Hampton Court was the earliest of its kind and gave rise to a fashion that remained in favour for about a century. The gallery is a curious and to our view an inconvenient shape of room. Its length is many times its width, and among some builders we learn of keen competition to obtain as great a length of gallery as possible. In the royal palaces good use was made of the galleries, but in private houses the suggestion that they were places of exercise, music, and dancing does not altogether justify their extravagance. The galleries were generally depositories

of the mansion's finest art treasures and contained the richest displays of furniture and ornaments. Here might be tables and chairs covered with stamped and gilded Spanish leather or embroidered velvet. On the walls would be tapestries, portraits, and Venetian glass mirrors, besides many other things of value. The most "worthy lord" Timon of Athens receives, as patron of the arts, the poet, painter, jeweller, and merchant in the gallery. In *The Winter's Tale* the statue of Hermione is displayed in a "chapel in Paulina's house." To reach the chapel the Kings of Sicilia and Bohemia with Florizel and Perdita have to pass through Paulina's long gallery containing her treasures of pictures, tapestries, and furniture. Leontes remarks:¹

O Paulina,
We honour you with trouble: but we came
To see the statue of our queen: your gallery
Have we pass'd through, not without much content
In many singularities.²

Most of the large Tudor houses contained a chapel. There was, however, nothing strikingly ecclesiastical about its construction and furnishings, and it resembled the other domestic rooms of the house rather than a place reserved for religious devotion. Some of the other numerous rooms in the private wing might be designated the study, the breakfast room, and the library.

One more room, and an important one, we must notice before we complete our inspection of the master's half of the Elizabethan mansion. This room is situated over the great hall and is known as the great chamber, sometimes identified with the withdrawing room and

¹ *The Winter's Tale*, v. iii. 8-12.

² Rarities.

serving the same social use as the drawing-room of to-day. For a house to have a great chamber denoted a certain rank and position in the owner. It will be remembered how Slender of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, always so anxious to assert the standing of his family, goes out of his way to mention the fact that his own house possesses a great chamber. When Falstaff asks Pistol if he picked Slender's pocket, the latter replies, "Ay, by these gloves, did he, or I would I might never come in mine own great chamber again else. . . ."

A small house-party or an intimate gathering of friends was entertained in the great chamber in preference to the great hall. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the interlude, which Quince, Bottom, and Company are rehearsing for performance before Theseus and his guests, is to be given in the great chamber. Moonlight is needed for the meeting of Pyramus and Thisbe; and when Quince complains of the difficulty of bringing moonlight into a chamber, Bottom, after consulting a calendar and finding there will be a moon that night, suggests, "Why, then you may leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement."² In *Romeo and Juliet* there is a scene in which the servants are busily clearing away a banquet from the great hall in order that Capulet's guests may dance. The following conversation is heard:³

First Servant: You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for, in the great chamber.

Third Servant: We cannot be here and there too.

¹ *Merry Wives*, I. i. 156-8. ² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. i. 57-9.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. v. 13-15.

Resuming our exploration of the Elizabethan house, we return to the "screens," or passage to which the front door gives access, preparatory to touring the other wing set aside for the retainers. It will be remembered that on the side opposite to the screens of the great hall are the buttery hatch and the door leading to the kitchen apartments. The remainder of the chief wing is taken up by the butler's room¹ (from one of which a spiral staircase descends into the wine cellar), by an ascending staircase smaller than the main staircase beyond the great hall, and by the corridor leading to the kitchen premises in the other wing.

The rooms and offices in this wing are numerous. In addition to extensive kitchens, larders, sculleries, spiceries, and the like, there is a comfortable room known as the winter parlour. This room placed next to the kitchen came into use when the Elizabethan lords had grown so luxurious that extra warmth during the cold winter months was appreciated. The rest of the wing, below and above, is taken up with numerous living-rooms and bedrooms for the enormous staffs which it became the fashion for great men to maintain. At one time the stables, dairy, and brewhouse were under the same roof as the rest of the mansion; but when the demands on space became excessive, these offices were banished to separate outbuildings.¹

In our tour of the house we shall have taken special notice of the staircases, particularly the broad main staircase leading from the top door of the great hall to the long gallery and great chamber above. These low, wide stairs of solid blocks of wood, chiefly oak,

¹ *The Age of Elizabeth* (Sir Walter Raleigh in *Shakespeare's England*).

with an exquisitely carved balustrade, constituted a remarkable feature of the domestic architecture introduced by the Elizabethans. They were, as in most innovations, copied from French and Italian models, and took the place of the circular stone stairways, which were about all the mansions of England possessed before their coming. The extent of these vast houses necessitated every wing having its own staircase; and while the subordinate staircases were not on the scale of the magnificent main flight, they were yet a considerable advance on their stone predecessors. Often the turrets, "the cloud-capp'd towers" as Shakespeare has it,¹ which added such dignity and beauty to exteriors of the Tudor buildings, were constructed over staircases. They were covered with "curved roofs of lead or copper"² and on occasions contained in the upper story an isolated room. Such a room was useful for hiding away a refugee, concealing a prisoner, or taming a wilful wife or daughter. It was in such a room that Silvia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was lodged by her father, the Duke of Milan; whence her lover, Valentine, could only hope to rescue her with the help of a rope-ladder.

If, on entering our mansion, we continue along the central passage without turning to the right or the left, we come to the door leading to the garden. Parks and gardens we shall describe fully in a later chapter. Now let us walk a little way among the beds and fountains and turn and view the mansion from this aspect. We see an imposing massive structure, giving an impression

¹ *Tempest*, IV. i. 152.

² J. A. Gotch in *Shakespeare's England*, II. 70.

of great solidity. A remarkable sequence of mullioned windows with handsome piers is enriched and set off at regular intervals by magnificent bays. The whole façade has an appearance of richness and permanence, and proves that the fine points of domestic architecture have at last been grasped and applied in England by the subjects of Elizabeth.

To supplement the impressions we have gained from our own imaginary tour of a typical Elizabethan mansion, we may usefully quote a description compiled from contemporary records. Sir John Cullum, in his *History of Hawsted*, describes the house of Hawsted, near Bury St. Edmunds, at the time Queen Elizabeth was entertained there by Sir William Drury in 1578. Sir William had rebuilt and greatly altered the old house. Cullum writes: "Its situation, as of many old seats in this neighbourhood, is on an eminence, gently sloping towards the south. The whole formed a quadrangle, 202 by 211 feet, within; an area formerly called the Base Court, afterwards the Courtyard. Three of the sides consisted of barns, stables, a mill-house, slaughter-house, blacksmith's shop, and various other offices. The entrance was by a gate-house in the centre of the south side, over which were chambers for carters, etc. The mansion house, which was also a quadrangle, formed the fourth side, standing higher than the other buildings, and detached from them by a wide moat, faced on all its banks with bricks, and surrounded by a handsome terrace. The approach to the house was by a flight of steps, and a strong brick bridge of three arches, through a small jealous wicket, formed in the great well-timbered gate."

This gate led to an inner court 58 feet square, in which was a fountain in the guise of a stone figure and a carved basin. The ground floor of the house contained a chapel, a large hall, parlours, a buttery, with kitchen and other offices. Cullum continues:

“Over the gateway, chapel, and largest parlour, were the royal apartments, which were approached by a staircase out of the hall. Several bedchambers of common proportions occupied the chief part of the rest of the first story. Among the rooms on that floor was one called the still-room.

“Contiguous to one of the bedchambers was a wainscoted closet, about 7 feet square, the panels painted with various sentences, emblems, and mottoes. It was called the painted closet; at first probably designed for an oratory, and, from one of the sentences, for the use of a lady.

“The windows, in general, were spacious, but high above the floors. The walls of the house were chiefly built of timber and plaster. The plaster in the front was thickly stuck with fragments of glass, which made a brilliant appearance when the sun shone, and even by moonlight. It (the plaster) contains plenty of hair, and was made of coarse sand, abounding with stones almost as big as horse-beans.” A great house of this kind with its smithy, slaughter-house, mill, and so forth, was self-sufficient and self-supporting.

The Elizabethans themselves viewed their beautiful new red brick mansions with considerable pride and complaisance. Lord Burghley wrote in his Diary of his own seat, Theobalds, to which Queen Elizabeth paid a number of visits: “To speak of the beauty of this

most stately house at large as it deserveth, for curious buildings, delightful walks, and pleasant conceits within and without, and other things very glorious and elegant to be seen, would challenge a great portion of this little treatise, and, therefore, lest I should come short of that due commendation that it deserveth, I leave it, as indeed it is, a Princely Seat.”¹

Commodious as the great mansions of the nobles were, the royal palace necessarily included rooms which were not needed in the subject's residence. These were the council chamber, the presence chamber, the watching chamber, and so forth. The arrangement of the principal rooms of a Tudor palace is best presented by the original plan of Hampton Court. Upon the dais at the back of the great hall is the entrance to a guard or watching chamber. Out of this opens the presence chamber, and out of this again the privy chamber, which gives access to the private apartment of the sovereign. From the opposite end of the guard chamber runs a gallery, which passes round two sides of a court and leads to the royal closet, overlooking the chapel. The council chamber also opens into this gallery. Courtiers and petitioners assembled in the presence chamber and awaited the appearance of the sovereign in public.

Paul Hentzner, a German visitor to England, was admitted to the presence chamber at Greenwich Palace one Sunday in 1598, to witness the passing of the Queen to her devotions. His own description of the occasion is as follows:² “We were admitted by an order from the Lord Chamberlain into the presence-chamber,

¹ Norden's *Hertfordshire*.

² Hentzner: *Travels in England during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*.

hung with rich tapestry, and the floor after the English fashion strewed with hay, through which the queen commonly passes on her way to chapel; at the door stood a gentleman dressed in velvet with a gold chain, whose office was to introduce to the queen any person of distinction that came to wait on her; it was Sunday, when there is usually the greatest attendance of nobility. . . . In the ante-chapel next the hall where we were, petitions were presented to her, and she received them most graciously. . . .”

The presence chamber appears to have been open to anyone who was entitled to come to court. The privy chamber, on the other hand, was very closely guarded, and only officers of the court, ambassadors, and other privileged persons were admitted.

In laying his scenes in the castles and palaces of the kings and reigning dukes, Shakespeare gives little or no descriptive detail of architecture and furnishings, and we learn scarcely anything of the way in which his sovereigns lived. More often than not he is content with merely indicating the particular palace in which the action passes: “London, King Richard’s Palace”; “Paris, the King’s Palace,” and so forth. In most cases he is satisfied with “a room in the palace” and does not specify any particular room. On occasions he goes so far as to require “an ante-chamber” or “a room of state”; and in some rare instances, such as the Jerusalem chamber in Westminster Palace in *Henry IV*, Part II, we find his stage directions quite definite as to location.

In some plays, however, Shakespeare’s knowledge of life in the royal palaces caused the correct room to be indicated for some particular function. The great

hall, for example, is the scene of Cymbeline's reception of the Roman envoys, the performance of Hamlet's play, and the banquets given by Macbeth and Wolsey. The presence chamber is specified for Henry V's discussion with the leaders of the Church on the matter of his title to the crown of France. The council chamber is much in evidence in *Henry VIII*, in which play, fuller than any other of stage directions,¹ ante-chambers to the king's and queen's apartments are designated. Private apartments especially named in the plays are Queen Gertrude's closet, Katharine's rooms at Kimbolton, and the bedchambers of Desdemona, Imogen, and Juliet. But, barring a few exceptions, bare titles of the rooms are all the information with which we are supplied. It is rare indeed for the poet to paint in details, as he does in the case of Duncan's description of Macbeth's castle at Inverness:¹

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses . . .

Here the dramatist wished to compare the peaceful aspect of the castle with the foul murder soon to be committed within its walls. He was not departing from his practice of allowing his audience to fill in scenic details from their own imaginations. And it is because he leaves this task to us that it is important to improve our knowledge of the surroundings in which his contemporaries passed their lives.

Most of the interiors in the scenic lists are necessarily those of kingly palaces or the splendid mansions of the

¹ *Macbeth*, I. vi. 1-3.

wealthy nobles. Humble dwellings are rare. The historical matter and the fashion in Italian stories made this inevitable. The point to remember, however, is that all Shakespeare's plays were modern plays, given in modern dress and amid contemporary settings. Shakespeare made no serious attempt to revive the correct period of a particular story or event. In *Cymbeline*, a play of the time of Roman Britain, Imogen's bedchamber in the king's palace is Elizabethan in all particulars. In the Roman plays themselves, in spite of a few scattered references to togas and the like, the characters wear doublets, listen to clocks, turn down the pages of books, and triumph over a host of anachronisms. Even when placing his scenes abroad and enlivening them with vivid touches of local colour, Shakespeare depicts in the main the corresponding settings in his own England. The country houses of Olivia of Illyria and Portia of Belmont are types of the splendid Elizabethan residences we have been considering. Shylock's house, with its casement windows, would have aroused no comment in Stratford-on-Avon.

The castles and palaces, in which scenes are located in the English historical plays, were, of course, built centuries before Shakespeare's day and obviously contained none of the characteristics of Elizabethan domestic architecture. In some of these cases, in that of King John's palace, for example, Shakespeare is silent on the point of detail; and this very absence of descriptive phrase gives an impression of starkness and strength, and allows our imagination to supply the particulars of cold fortresses, draughty palaces, and armed camps, applicable to a tragedy of the early thirteenth century.

In other cases Shakespeare credits these royal habitations with refinements and luxuries which no sovereign before Elizabeth had enjoyed. The play of *Hamlet* illustrates this point. The story is drawn from the ancient Icelandic sagas and deals with a time that was wild and barbaric. Yet Shakespeare, in his modernized version, rejects the old setting, the grim Kronberg Castle which had lived long in Elsinore memories, and substitutes the new Kronberg Castle, built on the site of its predecessor between 1574 and 1585. English players were familiar with the contemporary castle, having visited it in their continental tours, and could furnish the dramatist with the details which he gives us—details which seem a little out of place in a story of such savagery and crime.

Since Shakespeare made no serious attempt to recreate a period that was dead, preferring to deal with ever-living truths, it will not be necessary to list all the castles, palaces, and great mansions in his plays. In this particular sphere the poet's lack of descriptive writing leaves us with blanks which we must fill up from our own knowledge. It is well, however, to remember that when his action is passing in, let us say, the old palace of Westminster built by William Rufus in 1097, both he and his audience visualized a setting belonging to one of the gorgeous homes of Elizabeth.

So far we have confined our attention to the royal palaces and the mansions of the nobles. But the manor-houses of the squires and the residences of country gentlemen were also carefully planned to embody the new architectural features recently come into favour. The homes of such men as Justice Shallow, Petruchio, Oliver de Boys, and others would be constructed on

a carefully chosen site, of the now popular red brick, with all the latest ideas in bay windows, chimneys, doorways, and broad wooden staircases included. Expert designers would be employed, and that same symmetry, which Italian influences had imposed upon the larger English buildings of the period, would be achieved. The country house would be smaller and less ambitious than the mansion of the noble, it would contain less luxury, but it would be no whit behind in comfort and convenience.

The house of Justice Shallow stands in a remote part of Gloucestershire, in the Cotswold uplands. It would probably be built of the distinctive Cotswold stone. Its grey lichened roof and gables, its porch with the carved coat of arms, and its mullioned windows, give it an air of substantial worth. The orchards and gardens, arbour, and dovecot with its fluttering, cooing occupants lie glowing in the warm sunshine. Little wonder that Falstaff exclaims, "'Fore God, you have here a goodly dwelling and a rich."¹

The second degree of country society in the days of the Tudors comprised the yeomen. The generally improved conditions of farming and husbandry since the Wars of the Roses and the collapse of the old feudal system had enabled this section to better their circumstances to a considerable degree. The dominant social type in rural England was no longer the peasant rooted to his thirty acres and engaged in producing wheat and barley mainly for the consumption of his own family, but the prosperous husbandman or tenant farmer, owning or holding a hundred or more acres, who

¹ 2 *Henry IV*, v. iii. 6.

furnished wool to the clothiers, and whose produce fed the markets.

Harrison tells us¹ that this rising class lived well, maintained good houses, made money, kept servants, often bought the lands of impoverished gentlemen, educated their children, and gave them a good start in life. Many of their farmhouses, well built, picturesque, and convenient, are still with us; and, according to Harrison, they were furnished with costly chattels, plate, and tapestries, which, before this date, had only been found in the households of the nobles.

Cottages for the poor people of the country districts were built in great numbers, but the records suggest that they were not designed with particular care or skill. Indeed, the mason might be left to his own devices to make as good a job of a building as he could. Where stone was handy and plentiful, as in the Cotswold country, it would be used for the cottage. Otherwise a timber-framed house would be built. The timber structure rested on a solid plinth of rubble or block stone walling. Wattle and daub was used for filling the panels. In the timber framing, upright rods of hazel were sprung into prepared grooves, and small rods were woven in and out horizontally after the manner of basket-work. For daub, clay mixed to a thick mud with water and straw added, all well trodden and pounded together, was plastered on.² The roof was thatched, with dormer windows set in its thickness. Most of these cottages of the peasantry consisted of two rooms only. The "cot" in which Rosalind and Celia make their home

¹ *Description of England.*

² *Old English Household Life* (Jekyll).

in the purlieus of Arden would be a structure of this class.

As for town-dwellers, most of the London houses were built of wood, picturesquely beamed, with stories jutting out one beyond the other. The woodwork of the fronts was often grotesquely carved and painted, and the roof usually gabled towards the street. There were, however, a large number of stone and brick fabrics, fine houses, and old monastery buildings, especially along the banks of the river; and after 1604 the use of timber for the forefronts and outer walls of dwellings was forbidden.

The typical shop of the sixteenth century consisted of a single room on the level of the street, and open to it through a large unglazed window, the shutter of which let down to form a counter. The shops were still work-rooms where the articles were made. Most shopkeepers built penthouses against their lower walls for the display of goods. It will be remembered that in *The Merchant of Venice* a penthouse opposite Shylock's house is the rendezvous for Lorenzo and his friends when effecting Jessica's elopement.¹

Of the houses in the smaller towns many well-preserved examples are still to be seen in Stratford-on-Avon. Most of these buildings were two stories high, with the upper floor projecting beyond the lower and supported by carved wooden brackets. Writing of these houses, J. Alfred Gotch says,² "On the ground floor there were, beside the hall, on which the front door immediately opened, a parlour partitioned off (which was apparently

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, II. vi.

² *Shakespeare's England*, II. 63.

used at times as a bedroom by night), a chamber next the parlour, a buttery, and a kitchen-house which was built out on the yard or garden. Two or three bed-chambers of varying size filled the upper story. Occasionally an attic in the roof was lighted by a dormer window or a gabled window. From the front wall of the house there often projected on the level of the first floor a sloping tiled ledge, called a penthouse; on the ground beneath there stood a stall, which served as shop-counter when the householder was engaged in retail trade. The façades were of timber and rough-cast, and the roofs were tiled. In the streets in the centre of the town the buildings were contiguous; in the outskirts they were isolated, with enclosed passages or gardens separating them one from another."

The Tudors built solidly and built attractively. Moreover, they built extensively. Their energies were concentrated almost wholly upon domestic building. They added little to the magnificent cathedrals, abbeys, and monastic glories which they had inherited from their forefathers. Except for the Royal Exchange, they did little for public works. But their beautiful mansions, their goodly manor-houses, and their picturesque farmsteads attained a higher standard of beauty and comfort than any their predecessors had known. Now that we have some idea of the types of houses Shakespeare's generation built for themselves, the next step is to learn how they furnished and equipped them.

CHAPTER II

FURNITURE

THE Elizabethans were not content to build beautiful houses for themselves; they bought beautiful things to put in them. They were no longer satisfied with the rough but serviceable goods and chattels of their ancestors. They demanded richness and elegance in all things, whether for use or decoration, and developed an artistic taste and appreciation to which English culture had not hitherto attained.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the houses, even of the nobles, were scantily supplied with furniture, comforts, and utensils. After the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries, however, there was a considerable advance, for the gorgeous vestments from the abbeys and cathedrals were appropriated by the great households and devoted to domestic purposes. According to the seventeenth-century historian, Peter Heylyn, "Many private men's parlours were hung with altar cloths, their tables and beds covered with copes,¹ instead of carpets and coverlids. It was a sorry house which had not a fair large cushion made of a cope."² Other furnishings from the monasteries found their way to the palaces and mansions which were now springing up in many parts of the country. Indeed, the ecclesiastic policy of Henry VIII did much to beautify the Tudor home and raise it to a standard of comfort that caused comment

¹ Ceremonial mantles worn by bishops.

² *History of the Reformation of the Church of England.*

in foreign visitors. A French physician named Stephen Perlin spent a few years in England during the reign of Edward VI and Mary, and was sufficiently impressed to write in his *Description of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland*, "The people of this country are very good in the furniture of their houses, as good as any people in the world."

In spite of this opinion, the furnishing of houses at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign was mean and poor compared with that which came later. From a letter written by Lord Buckhurst in 1568 it would seem that even the royal palace of Sheen found its resources overtaxed in preparing for the visit of a foreign cardinal. Buckhurst offered Her Majesty anything she liked from his own house. But her officers did not consider his glass vessels good enough, and declined his square dining-table, much to his surprise and mortification. He had no plate to give them, but he lent his spare bedstead for the cardinal to sleep on; and when another bed was required for the bishop in attendance, he turned out his wife's waiting-women on to the floor and let his grace have theirs. What his wife and her waiting-women thought of his generosity is, perhaps fortunately, not recorded.

When houses belonging to men of Lord Buckhurst's social standing were so sparsely equipped, those of the classes lower down the scale must have been frugal indeed. The people as a whole were, as a matter of fact, quite content with the bare necessities which were all their fathers possessed; but that state of affairs was soon to be altered. The growing wealth of the country as a whole, the advance in commerce, the appetite for world-

wide enterprise, contact with other and richer nations, and the development of artistic and luxurious tastes, begat a dissatisfaction with all that was crude and ugly and created a demand for the beautiful and refined. Between 1570 and 1600 a remarkable change overcame the English home.

William Harrison, our useful contemporary guide to this period, writes with astonishment of the rapid rise in the standard of comfort. He says that the extreme delicacy of the new furniture was not confined to the houses of the nobility, but was enjoyed also by the lower classes. The aristocratic households naturally had the more expensive wares; and tapestries, silver vessels, and plate of various kind to the value of thousands of pounds adorned their many rooms. Knights, gentlemen, and merchants also had their tapestries, Turkey work, pewter, brass, fine linen, and cupboards full of plate. But it did not stop there. Costly furniture, he says, descended even lower; and artisans and farmers possessed their plate, beds with silk hangings, tables with carpets, and fine napery.

According to this observer, expensive as these new-fangled articles were, yet commercial prosperity was so widespread that all manner of unlikely people were able to afford them. The two things that impressed him most were the great improvement in beds and bedding, even among the servant class, who had previously had nothing better than pallets of straw to sleep on, and the discarding of wooden platters and spoons for implements of silver or tin by the farming and artisan communities.

An interesting point is the good taste displayed by the people as a whole in the excitement of this new luxury. There was a preference for brilliant colours, it is true,

but they were well blended, not vulgar and unrestrained. In the sudden acquisition of unexpected wealth, we could have forgiven the Elizabethans if they had run to the bizarre and extreme. But they appear to have kept their heads and rarely to have countenanced anything that might outrage artistic susceptibilities.

The labourers in the small cottages, with an average wage of £7 per year, could not afford many of the new comforts, and had to content themselves with furniture of the roughest kind. Inventories show that they had plain chests, three-legged stools, wooden utensils, canvas sheets and flock mattresses, pewter candlesticks, and sometimes possessions of more value. Those with money to spare, on the other hand, seemed ready to pay any sum that was asked for the goods they wanted. The following list of "household stuffe" bought by Lord North for his newly built mansion in Charterhouse Yard in 1575 will give some idea of the prices ruling (the spelling is modernized):

		£	s.	d.
Napery	—pd. for napery	9	2	0
Sheets	—pd. for sheets	10	13	0
Pewter	—pd. for pewter vessel	52	0	
Tables	—for tables, cupboards, bedsteads and stools	12	16	4
Bedding	—for feather beds, and other bedding	24	14	4
Carpets	—for green table carpets	3	7	6
Hangings	—for mending of hangings	3	0	0
Pots	—for black jacks and hall pots	0	13	6
	—for necessary household stuff for the kitchen	39	6	
Hangings, etc.	—for household stuff bought of Mr. Halton	1	2	3

When we remember that money was then about eight times its present purchasing value, we get an inkling of the expense Shakespeare's contemporaries were willing to incur in equipping their houses with all the latest improvements.

When reading Shakespeare's plays we must picture to ourselves the environments of his characters. Even in the historical plays, which with the exception of *Henry VIII* deal with a period far anterior to the prosperous days of Good Queen Bess, numberless passing allusions convince us that it was an Elizabethan setting which the poet visualized. Tudor habits of life intrude into such plays of the Dark Ages as *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, and *King Lear*. Even the Roman plays are not free of them; and as for the comedies, with their foreign scenes, the dramatist bestows upon his Italian-named characters homes of English opulence and charm. What are the seats of Petruchio, Timon, Olivia, Portia, Leonato, Oliver, Capulet, and others but Tudor mansions in an English countryside?

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the scene of which is Padua, Gremio, who, it will be remembered, is a rich and elderly suitor for young Bianca's hand, gives her father, Baptista, a description of his city home. His words paint a faithful picture of the contents of a house belonging to a wealthy London merchant of Shakespeare's time. Gremio tells Baptista:¹

First, as you know, my house within the city
Is richly furnished with plate and gold;
Basins and ewers to lave her dainty hands;
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry;

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 348-58.



PANELLED ROOM

(From an old house at Waltham Abbey)

In ivory coffers I have stuff'd my crowns;
In cypress chest my arras counterpoints,¹
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,
Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,
Valance² of Venice gold in needlework,
Pewter and brass and all things that belong
To house or housekeeping.

Those of us who have visited Tudor buildings may find the interiors rather dark compared with our modern well-lighted dwellings. This will prove to be the case particularly with the earlier Tudor houses. Wolsey's rooms at Hampton Court, for instance, strike us as somewhat dingy. We must remember, however, that in those days the oak panelling of the various rooms, being new, was a good deal lighter than it is now that time has laid its swarthy hand upon it. Moreover, the oak panels were often covered with brightly coloured tapestries, newly made; and other pieces of furniture in the room were often decked with fabrics of gay hue.

At night-time, however, the lighting contrast with our own homes would be striking. The Elizabethans depended chiefly upon candles. These were often home-made and were constructed of rushes gathered in the summer-time, which were dipped in fat accumulated in the family kitchen. Called rush-lights or "dips," these candles were little more than thin tapers. There was, however, a better variety composed of wax or white tallow with cotton wicks, which were made by regular candlemakers and sold by journeymen.

Candles were supported in iron holders, which could be either hung from beams or stuck by their iron spike

¹ Counterpanes.

² Bed-hangings.

into wooden posts. A later innovation, for use in a great hall or other large room, was an elaborate chandelier suspended from the ceiling in which the candles were arranged in the form of a circle or a cone. Candlesticks of the modern pattern did not come into general use until after the Tudor period. The only means of obtaining a light otherwise than by a live brand remaining in the ashes, was by the flint and steel and tinder-box.

Additional light for a banquet, a ball, or other great occasion was supplied by torches carried by the servants or fixed in sconces. Capulet, calling for space for the dancing to commence, cries:¹

A hall! a hall! give room! and foot it, girls.
More light, you knaves; and turn the tables up.

The maskers arrive accompanied by their torch-bearers, who greatly increase the illumination of the hall. Romeo, disinclined for merry-making, exclaims:²

Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling;
Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

The galleries, staircases, and rooms of a house not in actual use were left in darkness. People of importance would be accompanied through a mansion by a servant bearing a torch or lantern in the same way as they progressed through the unlighted city streets. According to the stage directions of *Henry VIII*,³ Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, traverses a gallery in the palace preceded by a page bearing a torch. Lady Macbeth, walking in her sleep through the ante-room to her apartment, carries in

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, 1. v. 28-9.

² *Ibid.*, 1. iv. 11-12.

³ v. i.

her hand the taper or thin candle which did duty in her bedroom.¹ This lighting business was a heavy household expense. At the end of Elizabeth's reign 12 lb. of white candles cost 4s. od., the equivalent of over 30s., in London.² No wonder poor people retired to bed soon after dark and got up with the sun!

It is probable that we should find the Tudor mansion uncomfortably cold. Most of the rooms were supplied with fireplaces in the new houses, but there were vast spaces, exposed to icy draughts whistling through badly fitting doors and windows, which were quite unheated. The open hearths were cheerful enough and, as we have seen, in rooms of the size of the great hall were sufficiently large to burn tree-trunks. The family and guests would gather round the roaring logs and beguile the short interval between sunset and bedtime with hobbies, games, gossip, and drinking. Wood was the general fuel. Sea-coal, so called because it was brought to London by sea, was limited in quantity, for the burgesses of Newcastle, who enjoyed a monopoly of the coal trade, restricted output to keep up prices. Coal, therefore, was beyond the purse of the poorer households, though coal fires and the newly introduced stoves were seen in the halls and kitchens of many of the wealthy nobles.

Carpets of cloth and Turkey work were in general use; not, however, for covering the stone floors, but as decoration for chests and tables. The floors were strewn with rushes, which were often transported a considerable distance and at great expense. When a new supply arrived, it was usually scattered over the old rushes, which were allowed to rot away. The air was often

¹ *Macbeth*, v. i.

² *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 124.

polluted by these decaying and filthy floor coverings, and sweet-smelling herbs were used to quench the unpleasant odour. Even a bedroom so exquisitely appointed as Imogen's apparently had these dirty rushes on the floor; but bedrooms were, as a rule, heavily perfumed.

One of the most distinctive features of Tudor furnishing was the rich tapestry, or arras, which was mostly imported from Flanders and used principally for hanging over the bare walls. An enormous quantity of tapestry was amassed during the period, and Elizabeth's own collection was immense. These tapestries were rich and colourful and represented both striking figures and extensive landscapes, the landscapes having a rich green as their prevailing colour.

When first introduced, the hangings were attached to the wall itself, but in consequence of the damp rising from the brickwork, it was soon found necessary to suspend them on wooden frames. The frames were placed at such a distance from the wall that there was plenty of room for a person to squeeze behind them; and such convenient hiding-places were in constant demand. Shakespeare makes dramatic use of them on a number of occasions. Falstaff, it will be remembered, hides behind the arras in the Boar's Head tavern, where he falls asleep and has his pocket picked by Prince and Poins.¹ "I whipt me behind the arras," says the eavesdropping Borachio in *Much Ado About Nothing*.² Polonius conveys himself behind the tapestry to spy upon Hamlet and is slain by a pass through the fabric. There are many other instances in Shakespeare and contemporary dramatists.

¹ 1 *Henry IV*, II. IV.

² I. III. 63.

In *Richard II* we come across the following passage:¹

Bid him . . .
With all good speed at Plashy visit me.
Alack, and what shall good old York there see
But empty lodgings and unfurnish'd walls,
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?

On the walls of the chambers of old castles the tapestry was hung on tenterhooks during the residence of the family. On every removal it was taken down exposing the bare stone. It is to this custom that the above lines refer. One department of the King's wardrobe was called "the removing wardrobe," and consisted principally of the arras that was to be hung up over the naked walls of the royal bedchamber.

Tapestry was not, however, within reach of everybody; and in many houses painted cloths were substituted for them, more especially in bedrooms. They were carried out in water-staining and tempera (distemper) on canvas, and were probably introduced by Italian artists early in the sixteenth century. Their subjects were for the most part episodes from the Bible and classical mythology. Sometimes direct copies of the tapestry designs were attempted, but more often the crude pictures in water-staining which decorated the plaster walls were the originals of the painted cloth artists.

Shakespeare refers frequently to these inferior hangings, the most striking instance being that in the dialogue between Falstaff and Mistress Quickly in the Boar's Head tavern, when the fat knight is attempting to borrow

¹ I. ii. 65-9.

money from the Hostess, to whom he already owes a goodly sum:¹

Hostess: By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining-chambers.

Falstaff: Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking: and for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in waterwork, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and these fly-bitten tapestries.

That tapestries were in the habit of becoming shabby is proved again by Borachio's reference to "the shaven Hercules in the smirched² worm-eaten tapestry."² The "drolleries" on painted cloths proposed by Falstaff for the garniture of the Boar's Head were some of those scenes of coarse humour which the painters of the Dutch school introduced between the end of the sixteenth and middle of the seventeenth centuries. They comprised representations of low tavern parties, soldiers' quarters, country fairs, and mountebanks; and in some of them apes and cats were shown drinking, playing on musical instruments, or acting as constables or watchmen. Hunting subjects were commonly employed, and "the German hunting" was apparently one of the most popular of the class.³

Falstaff has again the inferior type of hangings in mind when he speaks contemptuously of the soldiers of his company as "slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores."⁴

¹ *2 Henry IV*, II. 1. 152-9.

² *Much Ado*, III. iii. 145.

³ *The Works of William Shakespeare* (Staunton).

⁴ *1 Henry IV*, IV. ii. 27-9.

And Borachio refers to the habitual biblical subjects in the words, "like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy (dirty) painting."¹ Costard, again, remarks to Sir Nathaniel, after his performance as Alexander in the *Masque of the Nine Worthies* has earned the derision of his audience, "O, sir, you have overthrown Alisander the conqueror! You will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this."²

Verses were frequently painted on the cloths. They were often of a somewhat coarse nature and appeared on scrolls issuing from the mouths of certain figures. In reply to Jacques's accusation that he has "conned" his "pretty answers" out of posy rings, Orlando retorts, somewhat tartly, "Not so; but I answer you right painted cloth, from whence you have studied your questions."³ Inventories of the period reveal the great use made of these substitutes for expensive tapestry.

In reviewing the furniture in the various rooms of the Elizabethan home, let us commence with the banqueting hall and dining-parlour. The most conspicuous article in such places was the principal table at which sat the master of the household, the mistress, and members of the family. Where there was a dais this table would be set thereon in the place of honour. Such a table was capable of extension and was known as a draw-top table. It was also a "joined table"; that is to say, it was on a frame which fitted into slots in sturdy legs. These legs were sometimes plain, but later were extensively carved. The joined table was so named to distinguish it from the trestle tables. These were arranged below the dais, along the sides of the dining-hall, and accommodated

¹ *Much Ado*, III. iii. 142-3.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 578-9.

³ *As You Like It*, III. ii. 290-1.

the retainers and the poor relations. When there was not room at the high table for all those whose rank entitled them to this honour, they were seated at the upper ends of the subsidiary tables, and salt cellars marked the division in station. Shakespeare is referring to this in *Coriolanus*, when he writes, "As if he were son and heir to Mars; set at upper end o' the table."¹

The trestle tables were flat leaves, hinged, which rested on stout trestle supports. When not in use they could be folded up and placed against the wall. When Capulet gives orders that his great hall shall be prepared for dancing, he commands his servants to "turn the tables up"²—take them off their trestles and stack them. The servants have, as a matter of fact, already been busy clearing the floor below the dais; and the instructions of the first servant to those under him throw more light on the furniture common to the Elizabethan dining-hall.³

First Servant: Away with the joint-stools, remove the court-cupboard, look to the plate.

Chairs with backs and arms were not numerous in the Elizabethan home; they would be used at the high table exclusively, and then only for the master and mistress and one or two privileged persons. The rest of the master's family sat on joint-stools, and the servants at the trestle tables were supplied with forms or benches. The joint-stools were really joined tables in miniature, and when not in use were packed under the table with their legs turned inward.⁴

¹ *Coriolanus*, IV. v. 204.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, I. v. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, I. v. 7-8.

⁴ P. Macquoid in *Shakespeare's England*, II. 121.

The court-cupboard mentioned by Capulet's servant was a striking piece of furniture which stood as a rule at the end of the dining-hall. The gilt and silver plate (of which we shall have something to say in a later chapter) was arranged on it, and wine, fruit, and table linen and implements were kept in its confines. Plate was the pride of most households and was not reserved for the nobility. We shall have more to add on this subject in our chapter on meal-times, when we shall discuss the growing appreciation of refinement at table, with the substitution of vessels of glass and pewter for the old wooden utensils and the introduction of such new and strange implements as forks.

In addition to the court-cupboards, used in every household, some of which were beautifully inlaid or carved, the dining-hall would probably contain another chest or two for holding the increasing number of articles in use. The floor would be covered with the inevitable rushes, and a chandelier of candles would be reinforced by torches borne by retainers.

In the wainscoted parlour, the withdrawing-room, the great chamber, or other living-rooms, the luxury we moderns would miss most keenly would be the easy-chair. Not until the next century were chairs upholstered and stuffed. In Elizabeth's reign they were hard and bare, though sometimes very finely shaped and carved. Later, however, we find chairs covered with stamped and gilded Spanish leather and embroidered velvet. When the new padded chairs were coming into fashion in King James's reign, a new armless variety was called the farthingale. It was designed to meet the needs of fashionable women whose petticoats had reached such impossible

dimensions that a chair with arms was no use to them at all.

The Elizabethans were compensated for the lack of upholstery by their multitude of cushions. With these they made themselves comfortable, not on their wood-work chairs only, but on the floor as well. Cushions converted into a snug settle the long wooden chests constructed with a straight carved back and arms at each end. These chests were put facing the fireplace in winter, and the other way round in summer; and in their box portion one would often find fire-screens of wicker-work to protect the legs.

Even with the aid of cushions, though, the chairs and settles could not give the same opportunities for restful ease as our modern sofa. Therefore, an important article of furniture among the more luxurious was the day-bed, which made its appearance late in the sixteenth century. Olivia of *Twelfth Night*, whose house is represented as including all the Elizabethan refinements, is pictured by Malvolio sleeping on her day-bed.¹ Another reference occurs in *Richard III*. Buckingham, endeavouring to persuade the mayor and citizens of London to proclaim the Crookback king, cries:²

Ah, ha, my lord, this prince is not an Edward!
He is not lolling on a lewd day-bed,
But on his knees at meditation.

Sitting-rooms might also contain a handsome buffet in oak or walnut, usually most superbly carved. These buffets had drawers and shelves, and besides being ornamental, were useful when meals were taken in the

¹ II. v. 55.

² III. vii. 71-3.

parlour on informal occasions. A desk, a cabinet or two, a small draw-table covered with a Persian carpet, mats of plaited rushes for the floor, and embroidered window-curtains, completed the furnishings of the typical living-room.

The most artistic and attractive pieces of furniture were reserved for the long gallery which, as we have noted already, was the repository for the house's highly prized treasures. Along the panelling, most elaborate and handsome in its design, would be ranged chests and buffets of exquisite workmanship, "more often made of walnut, rosewood, or ebony mounted in silver, than of oak."¹ Painted tables, carved chairs, stools, window-seats and cushions would provide limited accommodation. On the walls, besides tapestries and portraits, would hang, very likely, Venetian glass mirrors and other mirrors of polished metal, and, on a bracket, a clock. In the gallery, also, might be musical instruments, a little organ, virginals, a viol, lute, or case containing flutes. China, bronzes, and other rare curios would be effectively displayed on magnificent cabinets, some of which were beautifully inlaid and placed in convenient positions against the wall. The gallery, indeed, was more a museum than a room to be put to daily domestic use.

Pictures, books, and sculpture found their places among the contents of the Elizabethan mansion. Shakespeare has a typical instance of a wealthy man's patronage of the arts in *Timon of Athens*, where a poet and a painter wait upon the renowned Athenian in his long gallery. The painter has brought with him a portrait of Timon

¹ Percy Macquoid in *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 124.

which he hopes will find favour, and the poet is anxious to obtain Timon's permission to place his patron's name on the dedication leaf of a new book of poems about to be published. We shall return to the subject of the arts and the masterpieces to be found in Elizabethan homes in a later chapter.

The average household had more than one method of telling the time. Nearly every garden had its sundial, and hour-glasses were still in use for measuring lapses of time after observation of the sun. Clocks and watches were common enough in Shakespeare's time, and striking clocks are frequently mentioned in the plays. The poorer classes, however, could not well afford them, and most of them were much more skilful in telling the time by the stars than their opposite numbers are to-day.

We now come to an extremely important room in the Elizabethan home: the bedchamber. Shakespeare himself gives us a remarkably detailed description of the bedroom of a lady of quality of the period. The play in which it occurs happens to be one of Roman Britain, but the poet did not allow the setting of a piece to deter him from dressing it in contemporary fashion. The scene¹ is Imogen's chamber in Cymbeline's palace. Iachimo has obtained access by a ruse; and while Imogen sleeps, he writes down particulars of the furnishings that he may report them to Imogen's husband, Posthumus, and make believe he has persuaded Imogen to be unfaithful. He steps out of the trunk, in which he has been concealed, on to the rushes which are strewn over the floor. By the flame of the taper he looks upon Imogen as she lies like

¹ *Cymbeline*, II. ii.

a fresh lily, whiter than the sheets of her bed. He resolves
 “to note the chamber”:

I will write all down:
 Such and such pictures; there the window; such
 The adornment of her bed; the arras, figures,
 Why, such and such; and the contents o’ the story.

Later, in Rome, Iachimo retails to the appalled
 Posthumus a minute description of Imogen’s room:¹

Iachimo: First, her bedchamber—
 Where, I confess, I slept not, but profess
 Had that was well worth watching—it was hang’d
 With tapestry of silk and silver; the story
 Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,
 And Cydnus swell’d above the banks, or for
 The press of boats or pride: a piece of work
 So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
 In workmanship and value; which I wonder’d
 Could be so rarely and exactly wrought,
 Since the true life on’t was—

Posthumus: This is true;
 And this you might have heard of here, by me,
 Or by some other.

Iachimo: More particulars
 Must justify my knowledge.

Posthumus: So they must,
 Or do your honour injury.

Iachimo: The chimney
 Is south the chamber; and the chimney-piece
 Chaste Dian bathing; never saw I figures
 So likely to report themselves: the cutter
 Was as another nature, dumb; outwent her,
 Motion and breath left out.

¹ *Cymbeline*, II. IV. 66–91.

Posthumus: This is a thing,
Which you might from relation likewise reap,
Being, as it is, much spoke of.

Iachimo: The roof o' the chamber
With golden cherubims is fretted: her andirons—
I had forgot them—were two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing, nicely
Depending on their brands.

In *The Taming of the Shrew* there is a passage from which we can form a picture of the morning awakening of an Elizabethan gallant. In the Induction to the play, the Lord, giving his directions to his servants concerning the disposal of the drunken tinker, Christopher Sly, conceives the happy idea:¹

What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
A most delicious banquet by his bed,
And brave attendants near him when he wakes,
Would not the beggar then forget himself?

Carry him gently to my fairest chamber
And hang it round with all my wanton pictures:
Balm his foul head in warm distilled waters
And burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet:
Procure we music ready when he wakes,
To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound;
And if he chance to speak, be ready straight
And with a low submissive reverence
Say "What is it your honour will command?"
Let one attend him with a silver basin
Full of rose-water and bestrew'd with flowers;
Another bear the ewer, the third a diaper,²
And say, "Will't please your lordship cool your hands?"

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Ind. 1. 37-62. ² A towel of figured linen.

Some one be ready with a costly suit
And ask him what apparel he will wear;
Another tell him of his hounds and horse,
And that his lady mourns at his disease.

None knew better than the dramatist the vast difference between the luxurious chambers of the rich and the mean bedrooms of the poor. In the Second Part of *Henry IV* he puts the following lines into the mouth of the King wracked with insomnia:¹

How many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lull'd with sound of sweetest melody?

However beautiful and artistic the appointments of a bedroom may be, they arouse little enthusiasm unless the bed itself is warm and comfortable. So thought the Elizabethans. Not only did they have bedsteads that were solid and handsome, but they had bedclothes which were as soft to lie in as they were good to look upon. The people of Shakespeare's day set great store upon their beds and mentioned them prominently in their wills and inventories. Shakespeare himself was careful to bequeath his "second best bed" to his wife and gave rise to a host of strange speculations by so doing, some even drawing

¹ III. i. 4-14.

the inference that he and his wife must have been on bad terms towards the end of his life. This is too much to read into these few words, for the best bed would naturally descend with the rest of his property to his heir, his eldest daughter, Susannah. In the will of Francis Fitton of Cheshire, who died in 1608, his niece, Lady Anne Newdigate, is left his bed of down, etc., in his bedchamber in London, with its canopy of yellow double taffeta and yellow silk quilt. How family beds descended from one generation to another is referred to by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale*, where the old shepherd expresses the wish "to die upon the bed my father died."¹

The most expensive and imposing beds were magnificent affairs of carved and inlaid oak or walnut. They were of the four-poster type, consisting of a great shallow box, raised above the ground, and supported by a post at each corner, the tops of the posts being connected by a rail or cornice. Behind the head of the bed was a panel of tapestry, embroidery, or carved wood; from the cornice hung curtains; and across the top stretched the "sperver" or ceiling, which again might be either of fabric or wood. Many of the bedsteads were covered with a wealth of carved and gilded ornament, their hangings, valance, and counterpanes of rich materials elaborately embroidered, and were worth great sums of money. As the silks, velvets, and other cloths used became more sumptuous, so the whole of the bedsteads were enveloped in them and the carved woodwork was gradually discarded. Huge sums were expended on the bed-trappings; and a bed prepared for James I at Knole

¹ IV. iv. 466.

by the Earl of Dorset was hung entirely with embroidered cloth-of-gold and cost £8,000 even in those days when money had eight times the value it has to-day.

Some of the beds were of inordinate size. The most famous of these large specimens, because Shakespeare happens to mention it in *Twelfth Night*,¹ is the "great bed of Ware," now at the Rye House in Hertfordshire, which measures eleven feet square and can hold twelve people.

The distinctive feature of the beds in the principal chambers of the great mansions was the heavy curtain which hung all round. These curtains were carefully drawn at night to keep out the cold and draughts, which were much more penetrating in the houses of that day, innocent of any pervading system of heating. When depicting the beds of people of quality Shakespeare frequently passes a remark upon the curtains. After stifling Desdemona with her own pillows, Othello draws the curtains of the bed before he unlocks the door of the chamber to admit Emilia.² Juliet's bed is curtained. After taking the Friar's potion, "she falls upon her bed, within the curtains," according to the stage directions. And when the nurse, according to another stage direction, "undraws the curtains," she discovers Juliet in her deathlike sleep.³ After the demise of Cardinal Beaufort in his bedchamber at Wolvesey Palace, Winchester, King Henry VI commends Warwick to "draw the curtain close."⁴ On Shakespeare's stage the curtain at the back covering the inner stage was presumed to be the bed-curtain.

¹ III. ii. 51.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. iii and v.

² *Othello*, v. ii. 103.

⁴ *2 Henry VI*, III. iii. 32.

Only the wealthy people could afford these splendid beds and trappings. Others, less fortunate, had to be content with something more modest. But even they knew how to make themselves comfortable. The ordinary type of bed favoured by men and women of the middle classes was a joined bed. Describing this, Percy Macquoid writes,¹ "The joined bed stood about four feet high at the back. It was generally carved and ended in short knopped posts of about three feet in height at the footrail."

The beds we have been considering were known as standing-beds. This was to distinguish them from the low frames on small wheels or castors, which were called truckle-beds or trundle-beds. These small movable beds stood at the foot of the great fixed beds and were intended for the personal attendant of the lord or lady. During the day they could be wheeled away and were pushed under the standing-bed until required again. The celebrated Anne, Countess of Pembroke, daughter of the Earl of Cumberland, records in her memoirs, "In the year of Our Lord, 1603, at Christmas, I used to go much to the Court and sometimes did lie in my Aunt of Warwick's chamber on a pallet." "Pallet" was a common name for the truckle-bed. Juliet's nurse sleeps in her mistress's chamber on a truckle-bed which in daytime is concealed beneath Juliet's own four-poster. In giving her the potent drug, Friar Laurence counsels her:²

To-morrow night look that thou lie alone,
Let not thy nurse lie with thee in thy chamber.

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, II. 122.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. I. 91-2.

The Host, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, directing Simple where to find Falstaff, says,¹ "There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed and truckle-bed." The bed on which the body of the murdered Duke Humphrey of Gloucester is brought before Henry VI² was undoubtedly a pallet or truckle-bed, one of the player-company's most useful stage properties.

Another type of bed was the "pressed-bed," so called because it was enclosed behind a cupboard panel or folded up into it. The pressed-bed was most common in living-rooms, performing the function of the day-bed, which we have mentioned earlier. In *Troilus and Cressida* Ulysses describes the Greek champion, Achilles, who is sulking in his tent, as "on his press'd bed lolling."³

Babies had their cradles, as we learn from the story of Celia and Rosalind, "who were ever from their cradles bred together."⁴ The very poor had to content themselves with straw pallets and a sack of chaff for a pillow.

The excellence of the bedsteads and their hangings was matched by the increasing fineness and delicacy of the bedclothes. Feather beds and good quality bedding were considered a necessity for people no matter what their station. Even servants and peasants enjoyed a substantial rise in comfort. Harrison says that once upon a time "if they had any sheet above them, it was well, for seldom had they any under their bodies to keep them from the pricking straws that ran oft through the canvass of the pallet, and rased their hardened hides." Now, however, they had a share of the feather beds, sheets, pillows, blankets, rugs, and quilts, which the growing

¹ *Merry Wives*, IV. v. 7.

² *Henry VI*, III. II.

³ I. III. 162.

⁴ *As You Like It*, I. I. 113.

luxury of the age was demanding from makers and importers in increasing quantities.

For supporting the bedding there was a network of rope. On it was first laid a pallet of wool or straw. On top of the pallet lay two or more feather beds. Then came the sheets, pillows, and blankets. On top of them another thin feather bed, with an embroidered quilt. How cosy people made themselves may be gathered from the inventory in a will of a well-to-do resident of Stratford-on-Avon, who died in 1583. He possessed a four-poster with curtains, piled up with mattress, flock bed and feather bed, bolsters, pillows, blankets, sheets, and "hillings," as coverlets were called. They were valued at the equivalent of £70 in our money. His total of bed linen was estimated to be worth £20, equal to nearly £200 at present rates.¹

Fine house linen made from flax was used in the better houses for board-cloths, sheets, towels, and napkins. We learn from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* how the household linen is taken periodically to the banks of a river in the buck-basket and there washed and bleached. To buck linen was to soak and steep it in lye, a process of bleaching in a solution of alkalies, potash, and soda with water, which was resorted to before soap was generally used.

Nightgowns were not in general use among the people of Shakespeare's time, and the custom was to sleep in the nethermost undergarment. It appears that in some cases even this was dispensed with, and the bedclothes were relied upon to keep one warm. It is easy to believe that the linen sheets would strike cold, hence the common use

¹ See *Shakespeare's Stratford* (Fripp).

of the warming-pan. Readers of *Henry V* will remember that when Falstaff's page runs to report the serious illness of his master, he pleads with Bardolph of the flaming red nose, "Good Bardolph, put thy face between his sheets, and do the office of a warming-pan."¹

From Iachimo's account of Imogen's room and what we have added thereto on the subject of beds, we may build up a fair picture of a bedroom in a fine Elizabethan mansion. There would be the square, four-posted bed, with its curtains of needlework and its hangings of silk interwoven with gold and elaborately fringed, as the main article of furniture. A truckle-bed would lie at its foot for the maid or servant. The floor would be covered with strewn rushes, or mats into which the rushes would be plaited. Tapestry, painted cloths, and some pictures would adorn the walls. A fine sculptured chimney-piece would occupy one wall, with handsome andirons by the fireplace beneath. A decorated ceiling would look down upon a scene of comfort and luxury. There would be little additional furniture. Washstands, chests of drawers, and dressing-tables, as we know them, would only be found, if at all, in the largest and most handsomely appointed houses. The ewer, made of silver or brass, the basin, and other toilet requisites were either placed on the top of a tall chest, or on a shelf affixed to the wainscot at a convenient height from the ground. A small table would carry milady's standing looking-glass. Wall mirrors were rare in bedrooms. There would be an array of jars of cosmetics, trinket-boxes, and other oddments.

Clothes were kept in chests or coffers, or in hanging cupboards. Some of these chests and coffers were plain,

¹ *Henry V*, II. i. 87-9.

others were painted, and others again were highly decorative pieces of furniture, beautifully carved, inlaid with coloured woods, and elevated on feet. Chests were more useful in bedrooms than chairs, and generally more numerous. The top of a chest was frequently covered with cushions to serve as an extra bed. The hanging cupboard was indispensable for the disposal of the bulky Elizabethan clothes, and was often an exquisite piece, carved and inlaid with tinted woods, ivory, shells, and the like.

The mention above of the ewer and basin brings us to the question of ablutions. Washing utensils were commonly made of pewter, except in the homes of the wealthy; when silver was used. Towels of fine damask were hung from a roller above the basin. Although the Elizabethans paid more attention to personal cleanliness than their forebears, who were apt to disguise their shyness of baths with strong perfume, bathrooms were a rarity in their houses. Paul Hentzner gives a description of the royal bathing-rooms at Windsor, one of which was walled with mirrors; but the primitive state of plumbing made anything more luxurious than a tub before the fire impossible for most people.

Soap of many sweet-scented kinds was in plentiful use and seems to have been mostly home-made from well-circulated recipes. The washing of clothes, as we learn from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, was an important duty in every household. Toothbrushes were a later invention; but it was beginning to be realized that care of the teeth had an important bearing upon health. Percy Macquoid quotes¹ an entry in the Shuttleworth family

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, II. 142.

accounts of the expenditure of ninepence to "buy half a yard of cloth to rub my Mrs. teeth." A Rev. Dr. Bois, who made a name for himself by his attention to hygiene and who justified his theories by living to eighty-three, was particularly emphatic on dental cleanliness. We are told that "after meat, he was careful, almost to curiosity in picking and rubbing his teeth, esteeming that a special preservative of health." Toothpicks, mostly imported, were in fairly general use, and Shakespeare alludes to them here and there, notably in *Much Ado About Nothing*, where Benedick, ready to do Don Pedro any service he may command, undertakes among other things to "fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia."¹

We now come to the "offices," as Shakespeare calls the culinary quarters. They comprised a great kitchen, buttery, pantry, and "pastry," the rather obvious name for the room where the pastry was made. The cooking was done over and on the fire laid on the hearth, which was wide and deep, and often large enough for seats to be built in on either side. All the ovens of the day were of brick and generally of enormous size for bread-baking purposes. Loaves were put in and drawn out with a flat, long-handled wooden shovel called an oven peel. Shakespeare uses a description of bread-making and baking as a metaphor where Pandarus is cautioning the eager Troilus on the need for patience.²

Pandarus: He that will have a cake out of the wheat must needs tarry the grinding.

Troilus: Have I not tarried?

Pandarus: Ay, the grinding; but you must tarry the bolting (sifting)

¹ *Much Ado*, II. i. 274.

² *Troilus and Cressida*, I. i. 15-25.

Troilus: Have I not tarried?

Pandarus: Ay, the bolting; but you must tarry the leavening
(the admixing of sour dough).

Troilus: Still have I tarried?

Pandarus: Ay, to the leavening; but here's yet in the word
"hereafter," the kneading, the making of the cake, the
heating of the oven, and the baking; nay, you must stay
the cooling, too, or you may chance to burn your lips.

The principal cooking utensil was the large iron pot. Sometimes this stood in the hot ashes on its three short legs, like the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*: sometimes it was suspended by its swinging handle with hooks, from an iron bar which was either fixed in the chimney or formed part of the tall andirons. To "keel the pot," like greasy Joan in *Winter's Song*,¹ was to cool the hot liquid it contained by stirring, skimming, or pouring on something cold to prevent it from boiling over. Kettles of brass or bronze, called "skillets," appear to have been cast in one piece and were set among the glowing ashes. "Let housewives make a skillet of my helm" (helmet), cries Othello.²

Roasting was done on spits, and a curious custom was to employ dogs for turning them. This explains rather a puzzling remark made by Dromio of Syracuse, when he complains of Nell, the kitchen wench:³

And I think, if my breast had not been made of faith, and
my heart of steel,
She had transform'd me to a curtal dog,⁴ and made me
turn i' the wheel.

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 930.

² *Othello*, i. iii. 273.

³ *Comedy of Errors*, III. ii. 150-1.

⁴ A dog with docked tail, no use for hunting.

Young boys were sometimes employed on spit-turning, and there were tramps who made a special business of it, going from house to house, and being paid the lowest wages of any on the kitchen staff. It is this that Benedick means when he says of Beatrice, "She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too."¹

The kitchen contained many other things, of course, in the way of furniture and utensils. When Bartholomew Hathaway, Shakespeare's brother-in-law, died in 1624, the inventory of his house² and its contents made by his neighbours showed that his kitchen property included a cupboard, a spit, a drip-pan, a 'baking "peel" for the oven (the long-handled shovel for putting the loaves of bread in and taking them out), two "kivers" (shallow vats), two "loams" (earthen vessels), pails, tubs, and odd implements. This was the kitchen of a modest house: that of a great mansion would be correspondingly better equipped. Wooden spoons plain and carved, beechen bowls, platters, horn mugs, leather jugs, a variety of knives, as well as silver servers, and the new china dishes, all were included among the furnishings of the kitchen.

The other important "office" in the Tudor house was the buttery. At the "buttery-bar" ale was to be obtained, fetched from the cellars beneath, to which a small stairway led from most butteries. Bartholomew Hathaway's buttery appears in the inventory referred to above as containing two barrels and a powdering tub (for salting meat). A large dresser was a principal article of buttery furniture, from which, as in Petruchio's house-

¹ *Much Ado*, II. 1. 260-2.

² *Shakespeare's Stratford* (Fripp).

hold, the meat was served and brought to the chief table for the master or his steward to carve. Huntsmen, the servants of guests, and sometimes a company of players, were regaled at the buttery.

We have now some idea of the construction of the Elizabethan houses, the names and uses of the various rooms, and the furniture and decoration peculiar and appropriate to each. We will next explore their gardens, and then look closely at the more important aspects of home life, particularly in relation to the plays of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER III

TUDOR GARDENS

JUST as the pre-Tudor houses of England had to be constructed with the thought of defence uppermost, so the ground which encompassed them had to conform to strategic necessity. The owners could allow nothing in the nature of a garden or orchard to provide cover for an attacking force or to obscure the extended view of the defenders. The practice of beautifying a residence by an attractive lay-out of its grounds was a luxury not possible in the stern days of the Wars of the Roses. Utility and the provision of food supplies for the garrison governed all gardening activity.

The freedom from these restraints, a boon brought by the peace and unity of the land under the Tudor dynasty, revolutionized the art of garden-planning as completely as it revolutionized architecture. The change began as soon as the feeling of security had driven fear and danger from men's minds. It had travelled far by the time of Wolsey, who laid out the grounds of his palace at Hampton Court with a beauty and splendour which were unknown before his day. It was left to the Elizabethans, however, with their greater wealth and wider knowledge, to show how much a well-planned garden added to the dignity and elegance of the fine new mansions that were rapidly taking the place of the feudal castles.

The people of Elizabeth's England enjoyed advantages over their predecessors beyond the fact that they could

so well afford to carry out innovations and experiments. They received expert guidance from many quarters. Travellers to Renaissance Italy returned home with a wealth of horticultural knowledge, the fruit of inspecting the exquisite gardens which clothed the Italian villas. Protestant refugees from France also brought with them new methods of cultivation, which they had tested and proved in their own country. The adventurers and explorers of the New World, again, would return with collections of strange exotic plants of which the Old World knew nothing. All sailors, indeed, were expressly ordered to bring home with them "the kernels of pears and apples and stones of stone fruit," as well as seeds of unfamiliar herbs and flowers. Nurseries were established; and the interest in the new science was shared by all classes from the Queen and her nobles to the humble cottagers.

Many are the great names who have left on record the pleasure they derived from flower-culture and garden-making. To us the most interesting is that of Francis Bacon. The beauty and peace of the gardens of Gray's Inn, which even in those far-off days offered, as they still do, a retreat from the hurly-burly and an opportunity for quiet meditation, owed much to his active interest. Bacon became treasurer of the society and rented chambers in the Inn from 1577 until the time of his death in 1626. There are records of considerable sums paid to him for planting trees and garnishing walks; and the essayist undoubtedly took an immense pride in the work. Possibly, it was his essay, *Of Gardens*, which prompted the Benchers to seek his aid in beautifying the Inn; or, conversely, his practical experience in the gardens may have inspired the essay.

Lord Burghley, Elizabeth's great minister, was another garden-lover. It is written of him in the *Desiderata Curiosa*¹ of the antiquary, Rev. Francis Peck, that "he greatly delighted in making gardens, fountains, and walks: which at Theobalds (his country seat) were perfected most costly, beautifully, and pleasantly; where one might walk two miles in the walks before he came to their ends." In 1561 we find Cecil writing to his son's tutor in Paris and asking for a lemon-, a pomegranate-, and myrtle-tree, with other things meet for his orchard or garden, to be sent to him.

As an example of what a typical Tudor mansion might comprise in the way of gardens and grounds we may quote from a survey of the manor of Moulsham taken in 1591. There were "many fair gardens and orchards belonging, replenished with great store of good, and some rare kinds of fruits and herbs. There belong to it a dove-house of brick; a fair game of deer imparked; a great warren; a goodly fishing-course both in private ponds and common river; a very good water-mill, and great store of other necessary provisions." We may supplement this extract with references to a contemporary description of the Earl of Leicester's fine garden at Kenilworth at the time of Queen Elizabeth's most famous visit to her favourite in 1575. The description is contained in a letter from Master Robert Laneham, who was under Leicester's patronage, to a London friend, and is contained in *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*,² by John Nichols. Laneham depicts the garden as being an acre or more in extent, with a pleasant terrace, twelve foot broad, and ten foot in elevation, laid

¹ Published 1732-5.

² 1788.

with fresh, fine grass, running along the castle wall. About the garden were placed stone effigies of Leicester's heraldic badges, the bear and the ragged staff, and a number of other ornamental statues. There were also two fine arbours redolent with sweet trees and flowers, one at each end of the terrace, whence one could look out over the garden plot below with its beds intersected by fair alleys of green grass and sanded walks. Playing fountains and shading trees provided a delicious retreat from the heat of the summer. Birds sang in the branches, and scented flowers and choice fruits completed a picture which the enthusiastic Lane'ism declared was "worthy to be called Paradise." To such an extent had the art of garden-planning been developed by Elizabethans that our informative contemporary observer, William Harrison, said in a moment of enthusiastic exaggeration that ancient gardens were but dunghills compared with those of his own time.¹

That Shakespeare himself shared the prevailing enthusiasm is proved by the numerous garden scenes in his plays. But except for a frequent mention of the garden wall, a legacy from the days when defence was the paramount consideration, the poet gives us no detailed descriptions of the shady orchards, the scented bowers, and flowered walks which are indicated in his dialogue. He does not appear to have had an expert botanical knowledge, nor to have mastered the technique of garden lay-out. But he did love the beauty of the flowers. He knew their colours, scents, and seasons. He did know something of the way a garden should be tended, something of the processes by which plants are propagated,

¹ *Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth.*

trees are pruned, and weeds controlled. Above all, he appreciated the peace and still beauty of the garden where one could escape from the crowd to partake for a while of the balm of solitude. There is no more restful scene in drama than the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*, where the turmoil and strife and hate of the court of justice are followed by the moonlit concord of the fair garden of Belmont.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.¹

The loving care lavished upon a cherished garden was often in Shakespeare's thought; and the pitiful prospect presented by a neglected haunt provided him with a ready metaphor for misgovernment, indifference, or carelessness. In *Othello* he emphasizes the effects of good culture and the reward of conscientious gardeners. Says Iago:² "Our bodies are gardens; to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills."

Shakespeare speaks so feelingly of the weeds in the garden that it looks as if he must have suffered the same pains in the back as the rest of us in the tiresome duty of pulling them up. Hamlet compares Denmark,

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 54-7.

² I. iii. 323-30.

fallen beneath the heel of a drunken usurper and murderer, to

an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.¹

Misgoverned England is the subject of the following two quotations:

. . . our sea-walled garden, the whole land,
Is full of weeds; her fairest flowers choked up,
Her fruit-trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd,
Her knots disorder'd, and her wholesome herbs
Swarming with caterpillars.²

Now, 'tis the spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted;
Suffer them now, and they'll o'ergrow the garden,
And choke the herbs for want of husbandry.³

That part of an estate which gained most from the peace of the Tudor régime and the growth in wealth and luxury was the flower-garden. It was an entirely novel feature and only appeared as a result of the improved conditions of life. Hitherto gardens had been viewed merely as places to grow things in: now they were a means of beautifying the home and adding to the pleasure and comfort of the owner. Wolsey, taking his ideas from the school of the Italian Renaissance, had given his compatriots an inspiring lead. Hampton Court was embellished with figured flower-beds, trellised galleries, terraces, cool arbours, fountains, and borders of trimmed box and yew. Other great men were quick

¹ *Hamlet*, I. ii. 135-7.

² *Richard II*, III. iv. 43-7.

³ *2 Henry VI*, III. i. 31-3.

to follow suit, until the flower-garden achieved pride of place in the grounds surrounding a mansion.

In all outdoor planning the flower-garden henceforward occupied the central position overlooked by the principal windows of the house. Such a garden was laid out with deep thought because it was considered important that the character of its design should harmonize with the architectural features of the house itself. In the outer wall, running parallel with the house, a wrought-iron gate admitted one to the flower-garden, and a broad central path led up to the garden-entrance of the mansion. On the one side would be the orchard: on the other the kitchen-garden. These might be separated from the flower-garden by walls of brick or stone, through which were gates or doors, frequently kept locked. They might, on the other hand, have only a hedge or a paling to mark their boundaries, with "planced gates"—that is, gates made of planks—as the means of access. In *Measure for Measure* Isabella holds the keys of Angelo's domain and tells the Duke:¹

He hath a garden circummured with brick,
Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd;
And to that vineyard is a planced gate,
That makes his opening with this bigger key:
The other doth command a little door
Which from the vineyard to the garden leads.

While Elizabethans found themselves free to give expression to the love of flowers innate in all men, they could not break with the old traditions of safety and security sufficiently to dispense with the surrounding walls. Incidentally they found these walls useful in pro-

¹ IV. i. 28-33.

viding shelter for the more delicate of their plants, particularly those transplanted from warmer climes. Many of the gardens figuring in Shakespeare's plays are walled enclosures; and the wall is sometimes specifically mentioned. In addition to Angelo's garden which we have just cited, Alexander Iden's, Capulet's, Shallow's, and other gardens are protected in like manner. Jack Cade has to climb over a high brick wall to drop into Iden's garden in search of something to eat.¹ Romeo climbs from a lane over the wall of Capulet's orchard, which we learn from Juliet is tall and difficult.² This is the wall, apparently, circling the whole of the property.

Walls ensured a garden's privacy. When Lord Bardolph arrives before Warkworth Castle with news of the rebel defeat at Shrewsbury for the Earl of Northumberland, he is informed by the Porter:

His lordship is walk'd forth into the orchard:
Please it your honour, knock but at the gate,
And he himself will answer.³

Olivia of *Twelfth Night*, Richard II's Queen at Langley, Richard Plantagenet in his London garden, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester at his town house, are other Shakespearean characters who enjoy the seclusion which a wall-encompassed garden provides. A wall would be essential in a town garden, such as the Bishop of Ely's garden in Holborn. But few Elizabethan gardens anywhere were open to the rude gaze of the common herd.

A characteristic, which modern experts and enthusiasts would notice immediately about a Tudor garden, was its

¹ *2 Henry VI*, IV. x.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 63.

³ *2 Henry IV*, I. i. 4-6.

formality. It was laid out in a rigid square and planned with mathematical precision and accuracy. Broad, straight paths traversed the garden from the house to the opposite wall containing the main entrance, while narrower cross-paths intersected them at right angles. These paths were generally paved with gravel, sand, or shell. Turf was not used to any great extent; and the beauty of a well-cropped, velvety lawn does not seem to have been generally appreciated. Bacon, indeed, used grass freely in his embellishments at Gray's Inn, and Shakespeare himself admired a luxuriant, vigorously growing sward;¹ but the care that we expend upon our lawns was reserved as a rule for the bowling-green.

The stiff, rectangular beds, with their soil heaped above the level of the paths, were bordered by wooden planks, tiles, or lead. Beds, where the soil was level with the paths, had neatly trimmed hedges of box or other suitable plant. The area of the beds was filled with intricate designs of detailed regularity and perfect symmetry producing the type known as the knot-garden. Extraordinary ingenuity was exercised in devising these geometrical patterns, which sometimes repeated the design surmounting the brickwork of the house.² The progress made by English gardeners in this direction is vouched for by Thomas Coryat, the contemporary traveller and writer. "The knots of the garden (at Fountaine Belean, Fontainebleau)," he writes in his *Crudities*,³ "are very well kept, but neither for the curiosity of the workmanship, nor for the matter whereof

¹ See *Tempest*, II. 1. 52.

² *Shakespeare's England. Gardening*, i. 377 (R. E. Prothero).

³ *Crudities hastily gobbled up in Five months' Travel in France, Italy, etc.* (1611).

it is made, may it compare with many of our English gardens." Shakespeare mentions this kind of garden in *Love's Labour's Lost*, where Armado in his letter to the King of Navarre refers to his "curious-knotted garden."¹

Another feature of the lay-out of the flower-garden was the fondness for alleys between high hedges and for garden galleries roofed in either by interlacing branches specially trained to entwine, or by climbing plants carried on trellis-work. Shakespeare's adjective for a shady walk of this description is "thick-pleached," and it is used by Antonio, Leonato's brother, in *Much Ado About Nothing* in referring to his own estate.² According to R. E. Prothero,³ the trees used for these garden alleys were those "such as willows, cornel-plums, maples, limes, privet, wych-elms, yew, box, juniper or white-thorn, interspersed with sweetbriers, honeysuckle, roses, or rosemary. For the trellises, vines, and clematis, or Lady's Bower, were often employed."

Topiary work of box, yew, and privet, cut into fantastic shapes of birds and beasts, and even men, was known as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century. These were distributed about a garden in a careful arrangement to preserve the balanced effect and to form avenues and charming vistas. Olivia's garden, laid out in the formal Italian style, has its samples of topiary design. "Get ye all three into the box-tree; Malvolio's coming down this walk," is Maria's warning to her fellow practical-jokers who are resolved to make a fool of the steward.⁴

A constructional device, which enhanced appreciation of the flower-garden, was the broad terrace, from which

¹ I. i. 249.

² *Shakespeare's England*, I. 377.

³ I. II. 9.

⁴ *Twelfth Night*, II. v. 18.

a flight of steps led down to the garden paths. This terrace was usually built along the front of the house, and its steps gave on to the broad central path running in a direct line to the main garden entrance gate. Sometimes there was more than one terrace. A second might run along the side of the flower-garden, high enough to enable one to look over the garden wall and obtain a view of the country beyond. The arbours, found in every Tudor garden, might be placed at the ends of such a terrace. But arbours were more often situated in orchards and will, therefore, be considered with them.

Other decorations include 'great vases of lead with the quaintly trimmed box- and yew-trees we have already mentioned. Statues were found in the more magnificent gardens; and the ubiquitous sundial was rarely absent. The merit of water as an aid to garden beauty was not understood as it is to-day. There were fountains, it is true, but the use of the pond or lake seems to have been confined to those who planned on such a generous scale as the enterprise of the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth.

It was a curious superstition of the time that certain plants were antipathetic or sympathetic to one another, and this superstition to some extent governed the arrangement of the flowers. Gardeners aimed at getting as much colour as possible the whole summer through and placing those plants in juxtaposition which were uniform in height. This conformed with the precise nature of the garden lay-out. Massed effects were not attempted, and broad splashes of one colour were not considered desirable. With no glasshouses or frames in which to raise a succession of bedding-out plants, space could not be spared for an over-liberal display of any one

flower. Perennials were preferred which succeeded each other in regular procession and supplied the garden with an unbroken array of bloom.

For a list of the flowers with which the knot-garden was adorned we are indebted to R. E. Prothero,¹ who has compiled from the plays a catalogue of the blooms which Shakespeare loved and to which he so often affixed the one really appropriate epithet. In the prim and stately rectangles grew "the 'faint,' 'pale,' primrose, 'first-born child of Spring'; crocuses with their 'saffron wings'; daffodils 'that come before the swallow dares'; the 'azured' harebell or wild hyacinth; the 'pied,' 'April' daisy; 'freckled' cowslips; orchids, or 'long purples,' that maids call 'dead men's fingers'; 'lady-smocks' or cuckoo-flowers; 'purple' violets; flower-de-luces or irises; 'crow-flowers' or ragged robins; 'cuckoo-cups,' or buttercups of 'yellow hue'; broom; columbines; pinks; carnations, or streak'd gillivors which some call nature's bastards; peonies; 'larks-heels' or larkspurs; 'sweet' marjoram and 'sweet' balm; poppies; 'bold oxlips, and the crown-imperial' both orange and yellow; marigolds, that close and 'ope their golden eyes' with the sun; anemones; aconites or monkshood; tall white lilies; 'hot' lavender; rosemary; the 'luscious woodbine' and its 'sweet honeysuckle' flower; the eglantine, or sweet-brier, with its flower and scent; pansies 'for thoughts,' or 'love-in-idleness,' or 'Cupid's flower'; the 'soft' myrtle; and roses in rich profusion, white, red, and crimson and of varied sorts—the damask rose, the musk rose, the canker or dog rose, the rose of Provence (or as it should be of Provins), the rose of York and Lancaster."

¹ *Shakespeare's England: Gardening*, 1. 378-9.

There are some rather surprising omissions from Shakespeare's list. He does not mention snapdragons or foxgloves; nor does he allude to several flowers which were very popular with all Tudor gardeners, such as hollyhocks, sweet-william, love-in-a-mist, love-lies-bleeding, and lilies of the valley.¹ The ignoring of the tulip is understandable, for this flower was only a recent production of the expert Dutch cultivators and did not reach England until the end of Elizabeth's reign. We must remember, however, that Shakespeare was not aspiring to be a complete horticultural guide. He used flowers as a poet uses them, to elucidate his thought and clothe it in the fair petals of language.

There is still some controversy as to which flower Shakespeare meant by the "streak'd gillivor." Some hold that he referred to the wallflower, which to the present day is called "gilliflower" in his native Warwickshire. Prothero in the above list classifies it as a carnation, and the latest editions of *The Winter's Tale* explain it as the clove-scented pink.² The interesting point is that the dialogue³ in the play reveals the fact that the "streak'd gillivor" was produced by the artificial crossing of flowers.

Perdita: Sir, the year growing ancient,
 Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
 Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' the season
 Are our carnations and streak'd gillyvors,
 Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
 Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
 To get slips of them.

¹ R. E. Prothero.

² *New Cambridge Shakespeare.*

³ *Winter's Tale*, IV. IV. 79-100.

Polixenes: Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

Perdita: For I have heard it said
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.

And in spite of Polixenes's protest, she declares: "I'll not put the dibble¹ in earth to set one slip of them."

The art of transferring the pollen of one flower to another of different colour, in imitation of the action of the breezes or the bees, was well advanced among Tudor gardeners. Harrison writes:² "How art also helpeth nature, in the daily colouring, doubling, and enlarging the proportion of our flowers, it is incredible to report; for so curious and cunning are our gardeners now in these days, that they presume to do in manner what they list with nature, and moderate her course in things as if they were her superiors."

Leaving the flower-garden for the orchard, we pass through a door in a brick wall, or, if the division between the two parts of the garden is a box hedge or paling, then through a "planned gate." The position of the orchard was determined by the necessity of giving shelter to the flowers in the flower-garden, and as the worst winds came from the east and north, north-east was the situation favoured by up-to-date garden architects. In Shakespeare's mind the King of Navarre's garden embodied all the new and fashionable features introduced by the horticultural experts in Elizabeth's England. We have already mentioned His Majesty's knot-garden, and we learn also from Don Armado's letter, that the orchard

¹ A pointed instrument for making holes in which to plant seeds.

² *Description of England*.

"standeth north-north-east and by east from the west corner of thy curious-knotted garden."¹

The orchard was an older institution than the flower-garden, which was only a Tudor innovation. Orchards had existed earlier and performed a useful service in the supply of food. In Elizabeth's day, however, the orchard did not only furnish an abundance of various kinds of fruits, but offered a delightful retreat to the tired and burdened nobles and gentlemen who owned them. William Lawson in *A New Orchard and Garden*² declares that an orchard's "principal end" is "the honest delight of one wearied with the works of his lawful calling," even easing "the tediousness and heavy load of three or fourscore years." It was while he was sleeping in his orchard, his custom always of the afternoon, that Hamlet's father was murdered by his treacherous brother, Claudius.³

The "thick-pleached"⁴ alleys of the orchards were the paths between the fruit-trees. They were overarched by the pleaching, or intertwining, of the boughs and twigs⁵ of pear and cherry and other kinds. The paths beneath would be gravelled, or, if gravel was unobtainable, laid with ashes and brickdust to keep them dry. The arbours were for the most part situated in the orchard. Sometimes these retreats were quite pretentious buildings: at other times they were simple bowers formed by posts and cross-pieces over which clematis, creepers, honeysuckle and other climbing plants were trained. Shakespeare has a beautiful description of an arbour in Leonato's garden in

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. I. 248-50.

² 1618.

³ *Hamlet*, I. v. 59-60.

⁴ *Much Ado*, I. ii. 9.

⁵ *New Cambridge Shakespeare*.

Much Ado About Nothing, where Benedick and Beatrice hide in turn and overhear their friends discussing them.

Hero: Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour;
 There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
 Proposing¹ with the Prince and Claudio:
 Whisper her ear, and tell her, I and Ursula
 Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse
 Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
 And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
 Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
 Forbid the sun to enter; like favourites,
 Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
 Against that power that bred it.²

The custom of using the arbours and the orchard as resorts for quiet thought, rest, and relaxation is reflected in numerous scenes from Shakespeare's plays. We have already referred to some of them. The elder Hamlet, Richard II's Queen, the Earl of Northumberland, Alexander Iden, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Richard Plantagenet, and Olivia, were all persons who appreciated the privacy and refreshment which a garden gives. Others, whose orchards proved a boon in more ways than one, were Brutus, Oliver and Orlando de Boys, Baptista and his household, King John at Swinstead Abbey, Othello in Cyprus, and Julia in Verona. It will be remembered that Justice Shallow, after entertaining Falstaff and Silence to supper, takes them to his orchard where they sit and drink and eat pippins, confections made with caraway seeds, and other trifles.³ This was the usual procedure in the "goodly dwellings" of the country districts during the summer season.

¹ Conversing.

² *Much Ado*, III. i. 1-11.

³ *2 Henry IV*, v. iii. 1-3.

A modern fruit-grower entering an Elizabethan orchard would not meet many strangers among the varied assortment of fruit-trees, nor would he miss many with which he was familiar. There was more difference between the orchard of Tudor days and that which immediately preceded it than there is between the Tudor orchard and our own. Contemporary writers remark with astonishment on the increase in the different sorts of fruits raised. Most of them are included in our chapter on food and meal-times. Harrison's¹ valuable testimony covers orchards. He says that the progress in fruit-culture kept pace with that in the flower-garden and never were orchards furnished with fruit of such good quality or so many varieties. He mentions "most delicate" apples, plums, pears, walnuts, filberts, etc., of many different species, which had been planted within the last forty years and were a great improvement on the old trees. He also tells us that apricots, almonds, peaches, figs, and cornels were recent importations. He had seen, moreover, oranges, lemons, and capers, and heard even of olives, and other strange trees, whose names he could not call to mind. Further Tudor additions to the orchard were melons, raspberries, gooseberries, and currants. A profitable line was the strawberries, which were bedded between the bush fruit-trees and thrived exceedingly. Roots of wild strawberries were gathered from the woods and transplanted, and those ones were selected which were found growing under the brambles. The Bishop of Ely—the fame of the strawberries in the episcopal garden in Holborn is alluded to in *Richard III*²

¹ *Description of England*.

² III. IV. 33-5.

—has the following remark to make on the culture of the fruit:

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality.¹

Gardeners of Elizabeth's day achieved considerable skill in the art of grafting, which was practised widely enough to receive general notice from well-informed observers. It is evident, says R. E. Prothero, that Shakespeare understood the different methods of propagating plants by grafts and slips and artificial impregnation.² During his entertainment of Falstaff, Shallow offers his guest "a last year's pippin of my own grafting."³ Touchstone's criticism of Orlando's verses found on a tree by Rosalind, is, "Truly, the tree yields bad fruit." To which Rosalind replies: "I'll graff it with you, and then I shall graff it with a medlar: then it will be the earliest fruit i' the country; for you'll be rotten ere you be half ripe, and that's the right virtue of the medlar."⁴ Rosalind is quibbling on "you" and "yew" and "medlar" and "meddler."

Two other quotations must suffice to illustrate the common interest in grafting, which Shakespeare reflected, as he reflected so faithfully every common interest of his time. Describing base blood in one of noble birth, the poet says, "Noble stock was graft with crab-tree⁵ slip";⁶ and in *Henry V* he puts this query into the mouth of the Dauphin of France.⁷

¹ *Henry V*, 1. i. 60-2.

² *Henry IV*, v. iii. 2-3.

⁵ Crab-apple tree.

⁷ III. v. 5-9.

² *Shakespeare's England*, i. 369.

⁴ *As You Like It*, III. ii. 124-8.

⁶ *Henry VI*, III. ii. 214.

Antipholus of Syracuse, whom she mistakes for her spouse:

Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
Whose weakness married to thy stronger state,
Makes me with thy strength to communicate:
If aught possess thee from me, it is dross,
Usurping ivy, brier, or idle moss;
Who, all for want of pruning, with intrusion
Infect thy sap, and live on thy confusion.¹

The other passage is from *The Tempest*. The exiled Prospero says of Antonio, his perfidious brother who usurped his dukedom:

Now he was
The ivy, which had hid my princely trunk
And suck'd my verdure out on 't.²

Two things about an Elizabethan orchard and garden would strike the modern expert as strange. One would be the absence of any glass-culture, the use of glass being a device of the future: the other would be the failure to take advantage of the extensive wall space for the training of certain fruit-trees, a practice that was not adopted until the next century. Such fruits as apricots, which we invariably place against a wall, were then grown as standards. The following lines from *Richard II*³ accurately portray the prevailing method. The gardener is addressing his assistant.

Go, bind thou up yon dangling apricocks,
Which, like unruly children, make their sire
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight:
Give some supportance to the bending twigs . . .
Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays
That look too lofty . . .

¹ II. ii. 176-82.

² I. ii. 85-7.

³ III. iv. 29-35.

The Tudors and their successors made every effort to promote the culture of the vine, and with many of the great houses a vineyard was a much cherished part of the estate. Barnabe Googe, the contemporary expert, who published *Four Books of Husbandry* in 1577, gave it as his opinion that a western aspect was the most satisfactory. Shakespeare concurred in this view, for he describes Angelo's domain in *Measure for Measure* in the lines:¹

He hath a garden circummured with brick,
Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd;
And to that vineyard is a planched gate.

Famous vineyards are commemorated in place names and the names of mansions. Compton Wynyates, the fine Tudor house built by Henry VIII's favourite, Sir William Compton, in the vale of the Red Horse at the foot of the Edge Hills, and now the property of his descendant, the Marquess of Northampton, was originally Compton Vineyards, when grape-vines were cultivated on the slopes of the hill that rises directly from the gardens. A few of the old vines still survive.

Orazio Busino, chaplain to the Venetian Ambassador to James I, collected some impressions of England for the "sole pleasure of his most illustrious lord," calling his chronicle *Anglipotrida*. He tells how he was taken by Lord Exeter into his vineyard, there tasted the grapes, and compared their state of frowardness. It is related again in Strype's *Life of Grindal*, who was successively Bishop of London, Archbishop of York and of Canter-

¹ IV. i. 28-30.

bury, that the grapes which grew at the bishop's palace in Fulham were fine specimens, and so much enjoyed by the Queen and so early ripe that his reverence used to send her a present of them every year. In spite, however, of well-intentioned efforts to develop and extend vine-culture in England, the hope of establishing a native wine industry was frustrated by the greater skill and advantages of the French growers.

Before the English began to beautify their houses, they grew their herbs and vegetables in any old plot of ground which might be expected to give reasonably good results. With the coming of the flower-garden, however, the important part of the grounds, namely, that in front of the principal windows of the house, was devoted to the formal knot-garden with its many coloured blooms, and the unlovely, untidy kitchen-garden was consigned to some inconspicuous corner. Not only was the kitchen-garden offensive to the more refined senses of the Elizabethans on account of its lack of beauty; but its strong odours could not be allowed to invade the now luxurious living-rooms. These odours were not confined to such aggressive vegetables as onions, garlic, and leeks, but included the potent medicinal herbs with which every Tudor kitchen-garden was plentifully stocked.

Although gardeners had not the help of glass, vegetable-growing had made immense strides since the beginning of the century. Half the available ground was given over to them—the other half being devoted to herbs—and a goodly supply was insured for the banquets in which they now played so prominent a part. Most of the vegetables we consume to-day were grown by the

Elizabethans, and they are listed in our chapter on the meals of the period. Items, very familiar to us, which were then new to the table, were peas and artichokes. Asparagus, scarlet runners, kidney beans, and horse-radish were not known;¹ but the most remarkable absentee from the cultivated list was the potato. Although it had actually come to England in Shakespeare's youth, many years were to elapse before potatoes occupied any considerable space in the kitchen-garden. Some plants carefully raised at the time have now fallen into disfavour. A notable example is the skirret, or water-parsnip, grown for its tuber roots, which were cooked and eaten as a great delicacy. Other plants strike us as rather out of place in the kitchen-garden. Violets, primroses, and cowslips would now be more at home among the flowers, but as they were then used for salads, they were grown conveniently and appropriately alongside other things destined for the cook-house.

Some plants which we now grow for food were then grown for medicine. Rhubarb is a case in point. It was supposed to have valuable properties as a physic. All medicine was herbal and mostly home-grown, hence the great importance of the other half of the kitchen-garden. Herbs were also employed in distilling; and another use for the delicately scented varieties was a sweetening of the atmosphere in living-rooms, where they were scattered over the decaying rushes on the floors.

In *Romeo and Juliet* we have Friar Laurence rising early and going out into his herb-garden, a basket on his arm.

¹ R. E. Prothero in *Shakespeare's England*, i. 374.

I must up-fill this osier cage¹ of ours
 With baleful weeds and precious-juiced flowers.
 The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;
 What is her burying grave, that is her womb:
 And from her womb children of divers kind
 We sucking on her natural bosom find,
 Many for many virtues excellent,
 None but for some, and yet all different.
 O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
 In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities.

Within the infant rind of this small flower
 Poison hath residence, and medicine power:
 For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;
 Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.²

Perdita's garden, a humble cottage garden, is largely devoted to herbs—naturally enough, when culinary, medicinal, and aromatic demands have to be met. There are rue, "the herb of grace," the emblem of sorrow and repentance, and rosemary, the symbol of remembrance.

Also

Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram,
 The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
 And with him rises weeping.³

Adjoining the kitchen-garden or the orchard was the dovecot, the mark of a substantial house in Tudor times, when pigeons were a staple article of food, especially in winter. Capulet's establishment is so equipped; and the Nurse speaks of sitting with Juliet "in the sun under the dove-house wall."⁴

¹ Basket made of water willow. ² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iii. 7-26.

³ *The Winter's Tale*, IV. iv. 104-6. ⁴ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iii. 27.

Besides their gardens, orchards, and pleasancess, all great landowners had their parks, and the countryside was thickly sprinkled with these enclosures where deer and other game were preserved. Some of these parks were hunting estates dating from ancient times, but in the lifetime of Shakespeare many were new encroachments on the peasant lands. Talbot compares the precarious situation of the English forces in France to hunted deer in a park:¹

How are we park'd and bounded in a pale,
A little herd of England's timorous deer,
Mazed with a yelping kennel of French curs.

The great mansions in Shakespearean drama are to be pictured as isolated by an extensive park, like that which still surrounds the fine Tudor house of Knole at Sevenoaks. At Middleham Castle, the seat of the Archbishop of York, the Duke of Gloucester, Lord Hastings, and Sir William Stanley conceal themselves in the "chiefest thicket of the park," waiting to accomplish the escape of Edward IV as he rides to hunting. Edward, discovering them, asks, "Stand you thus close, to steal the bishop's deer?"² We are given to understand that all the scenes of *Love's Labour's Lost* are laid in the King of Navarre's wooded hunting park. Don Armado in his letter to the King says of the ground he walks on, "it is ycleped thy park."³ Petruchio, on his home-coming, scolds his servants for not obeying his orders to meet him in the park;⁴ and Justice Shallow complains bitterly to Falstaff that he has beaten his men, killed his deer, and broken

¹ 1 *Henry VI*, IV. ii. 45-47.

² 3 *Henry VI*, IV. v. 3 and 17.

³ I. i. 242.

⁴ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 133.

open his lodge.¹ Every "goodly dwelling," then, belonging to the great nobles and gentlemen among Shakespeare's characters, enjoys the seclusion and protection of a beautiful, wooded park.

Of Tudor gardens we may say in summary that in beauty of design, in the adoption of novel features and new ideas, and in their rich and varied content, their development equalled the progress made in the architecture of the mansions and the new luxurious furnishings.

¹ *Merry Wives*, I. I. 114-15.

CHAPTER IV

STAFFS AND SERVANTS

THERE was no servant problem in Tudor England. So far from service being considered derogatory, even men and women of gentle birth were only too anxious to find a post on the staffs of the great households. When a master cook, with a huge staff under him, was satisfied with wages of £3 6s. 8d. per year, and when a woman housekeeper and three other female servants could all be hired for less than £1 per quarter, it was natural that the personnel of the wealthy Elizabethan home should reach large proportions.

In some cases the number of retainers was excessive and a severe commentary on the vanity of the master. Great men tried to outdo each other in the magnificence of their trains. Cardinal Wolsey was a typical example. His gentleman-usher, George Cavendish, who wrote the biography of his master, describes the prelate's passage through the City of London in 1526 in the following terms:

"Then marched he forward out of his own house at Westminster, passing through all London, over London Bridge, having before him of gentlemen a great number, three in a rank, in black velvet livery coats, and the most part of them with great chains of gold about their necks. And all his yeomen, with noblemen's and gentlemen's servants following him in French tawny livery coats; having embroidered upon the backs and breasts of the said coats these letters, T. and C., under the

cardinal's hat. His sumpter mules, which were twenty in number and more, with his carts and other carriages of his train, were passed on before, conducted and guarded with a great number of bows and spears. He rode like a cardinal, very sumptuously, on a mule trapped with crimson velvet upon velvet, and his stirrups of copper and gilt; and his spare mule following him with like apparel. And before him he had his two great crosses of silver, two great pillars of silver, the great seal of England, his cardinal's hat, and a gentleman that carried his valaunce, otherwise called a cloak bag; which was made altogether of fine scarlet cloth, embroidered over and over with cloth of gold very richly, having in it a cloak of fine scarlet. Thus passed he through London, and all the way of his journey, having his harbingers passing before to provide lodgings for his train."

This liking for display was as pronounced among the Elizabethans as it had been among Wolsey's contemporaries. The growing wealth of England, however, had made it possible for many more of the great men of the land to indulge in it. Some of the castles and mansions of the nobles were little behind the royal palaces themselves in the size of their retinue. Harrison called these armies of servants "great swarms of idle serving-men,"¹ and said that no nation kept such a store of them as the English. Hentzner added his testimony: "The English are lovers of show, liking to be followed wherever they go by whole troops of servants, who wear their master's arms in silver fastened to their left arms."² This love of "swank"—to use the modern

¹ *Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth.*

² *Travels in England during the Reign of Elizabeth.*



IN THE BANQUET HALL

(From a print by *Crispin de Passe* in the *Hortus Voluptatum* Series)

slang—grew to such ridiculous proportions that a proclamation was issued from Greenwich palace in 1583, condemning the practice of the gentry in maintaining a host of retainers, often at a cost beyond their means and above their station, and calling it “a pernicious sore in the commonwealth.”

The princely and noble characters in Shakespeare's plays are always surrounded by crowds of servants, messengers, attendants, heralds, and officers of many kinds and duties, imitating therein the behaviour of the great national figures of the poet's own day. It will be remembered that King Lear, after his abdication, arrives to stay with his daughter Goneril accompanied by a train of a hundred knights and squires. Goneril not only protests at the size of this retinue, which Lear considers necessary to his dignity and position, but takes it upon herself to dismiss fifty of them. The other daughter, Regan, is no more willing to house her aged father's suite; and Lear, stung by their ingratitude, goes out into the storm, accompanied only by the Fool and his faithful supporter, Kent.

In *Henry VI*, those great rivals for supreme power, Cardinal Beaufort and Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, are followed by strong bands of servants who pelt each other with stones in the streets of London and create such a tumult that the Mayor appeals to the King to force the combatants to compose their quarrels. It is important to note that Gloucester addresses those rioting on his behalf as “you of my household.”¹

In addition to the large numbers of servitors maintained by kings, dukes, and other personages in church

¹ 1 *Henry VI*, III. 1. 92.

and state, the country gentlemen are also represented by Shakespeare as well supplied with domestics. Capulet's house is full of servants; so is Baptista's. Alexander Iden, the esquire of Kent, who declares he is contented with the "small inheritance" his father left him and does not aspire to become great, yet has five menservants within call when confronted by the fugitive Jack Cade in his walled garden. Antipholus of Ephesus employs his "bondman," Dromio, Luce, a lady's maid, six girls, Maud, Bridget, Maria, Cicely, Gillian, and Ginn,¹ and the kitchen wench, Nell. The dramatis personae of *Julius Caesar* include six named characters who are servants to Brutus. Even the penurious Falstaff has taken Bardolph into his employ and also has a small page in attendance on him. No one, who had any social standing to speak of, could afford to be without his tribe of menials.

In the larger households gentlemen and gentlewomen were often employed on the staff. Young men of good family were either sent abroad with letters of introduction to take service with foreign princes and dukes, or through influence became pages and gentlemen-in-waiting at the court of their own sovereign. They were given accommodation in the palaces, and attended upon the royal personage and his family. Shakespeare shows a number of these gentlemen retainers. Bertram, Count of Rousillon, of *All's Well That Ends Well*, has his chamber in the palace of the king of France; Valentine and Proteus, the two Gentlemen of Verona, enter the service of the Duke of Milan, and Valentine has his chamber in the ducal home; Posthumus is taken into

¹ *Comedy of Errors*, III. 1. 31.

personal service by Cymbeline and made a gentleman of the bedchamber. Posthumus had lost both his father and mother; and it was the custom to make orphans of the nobility wards of the sovereign. Another reference to this occurs in *All's Well That Ends Well*, where the King of France tells Helena:¹

This youthful parcel
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing,
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice
I have to use.

It was not in the royal households only that men and women of gentle birth filled positions of servitors. In the mansions of wealthy noblemen and priests they are frequently found. Helena herself is the child of a deceased doctor; and although young Bertram of Rousillon considers her his social inferior, his mother, the Countess, has no such opinion. Indeed, in reading Shakespeare, one is often puzzled by the terms of familiarity on which men and women of importance appear to be with their personal attendants. They discuss their most confidential business and intimate private affairs with them, ask and take their advice, and interest themselves deeply in their dependents' future. This becomes reasonable when we remember the status of these retainers and realize there is often no great social gap between master and man, mistress and waiting-woman.

When introduced to the men and women on Portia's staff at Belmont,² we soon understand that Nerissa is more than a lady's maid. She is her mistress's confidante

¹ *All's Well*, II. iii. 58-61.

² *The Merchant of Venice*, I. ii.

and later marries Gratiano. Gratiano was Bassanio's friend and equal; and while the young suitor weds the heiress of Belmont, there is no suggestion that Gratiano has married beneath him by espousing "the waiting-maid." There are a number of other instances in Shakespeare which show ladies and their waiting-women on terms of closest intimacy. Julia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* even consults her woman, Lucetta, on the subject of her suitors; Iago's wife, Emilia, is Desdemona's confidential attendant; Beatrice jokes familiarly with her cousin Hero's gentlewoman, Margaret, to cite a few. The custom of ladies of the nobility of appointing gentlewomen to wait on them offered a splendid opening for the daughters of gentlefolk in poorer circumstances. These girls met with no derogatory treatment, and eligible husbands were found for them, with dowries thrown in. Almost the last request of the dying Katharine of Arragon is that the King will provide for those gentlewomen who have served her to the end.

My next poor petition
Is that his noble grace would have some pity
Upon my wretched women, that so long
Have follow'd both my fortunes faithfully:
Of which there is not one, I dare avow—
And now I should not lie—but will deserve
For virtue and true beauty of the soul,
For honesty and decent carriage,
A right good husband, let him be noble:
And, sure, those men are happy that shall have 'em.¹

The members of Olivia's household in *Twelfth Night* are not easy to place. Maria is described in the list of

¹ *Henry VIII*, IV. ii. 138-47.

characters as "Olivia's woman"; and Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's uncle, speaks of her as "my niece's chambermaid,"¹ though he treats her as a social equal. Olivia herself refers to her as "my gentlewoman," and the confidential way in which she talks with her suggests that Maria is the daughter of an impoverished gentleman and is earning her living under Olivia's roof. Fabian, again, is a difficult person to bestow a rank upon. He is generally described as "servant to Olivia," and in talking to Sir Toby and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, he employs the pronoun "you," which would be natural in a respectful inferior. On the other hand, he cannot be much inferior, for he joins in the pranks played upon Malvolio, is given the title of "signior" by Sir Toby, is treated as an equal in the matter of the duel by "Cesario," and speaks to Olivia of her uncle by his Christian name. Probably Fabian's case was a parallel to Maria's.

As an example of the privileges enjoyed by these personal attendants of education and breeding, Hero's women, Margaret and Ursula, Don Pedro's man, Balthasar, and Don John's man, Borachio, all attend the masked ball given in Leonato's house² and enter into the festivities on an equal footing with his exalted guests.

Sir Toby Belch appears to be a poor relation living on the bounty of his niece. There is no suggestion that she is his ward. In several of Shakespeare's plays we find relatives in like manner dependent on the most well-to-do member of the family. In Tudor times large households made provision for family hangers-on,

¹ I. iii. 54.

² *Much Ado*, II. 1.

who were sometimes a legacy from one generation to the next. On his arrival with his bride at his country house, Petruchio tells a servant, "Bid my cousin Ferdinand come hither," and then, turning to his wife, explains, "One, Kate, that you must kiss, and be acquainted with."¹ But this poor relation never actually puts in an appearance.

In addition to the men and women of good family who took service in the great households, there was, of course, a host of servants drawn from lower orders of society. So far from being looked down upon, as it is to-day, domestic service was the most attractive of all callings, save that of fighting; and those who hoped to obtain a good billet had to have liberal qualifications. In a pamphlet on *Civil and Uncivil Life*, issued in 1579, a country gentleman sets forth the varied accomplishments of the menservants in his employ at his country residences. Our "serving-men," he says, "can well and decently wear their garments, and chiefly their livery coats, their swords and bucklers; they can also carve very comely at table, as to unlace a coney, to rase a capon, trump a crane, and so likewise handle all other dishes and meats that are set on the board before you. Some of them also can wrestle, leap well, run, and dance. There are also those that can shoot in long bows, cross-bows, or handgun. Yea, there wanteth not some that are both so wise, and of so good audacity, as they can, and do (for lack of better company) entertain their master with table talk, be it his pleasure to speak either of hawks, or hounds, fishing, or fowling, sowing or grafting, ditching or hedging, the dearth or cheapness of grain, or

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. 1. 154-5.

any such matters, whereof gentlemen commonly speak in the country."

In *King Lear*, the Earl of Kent, having disguised himself, applies to the old king for the position of personal servant in order that he may keep secret watch over him and save him as far as possible from the machinations of his enemies. Lear inquires into Kent's qualifications in the following dialogue:¹

Lear: How now! What art thou?

Kent: A man, sir.

Lear: What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

Kent: I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish.

Lear: What art thou?

Kent: A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

Lear: If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent: Service.

Lear: Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent: You.

Lear: Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent: No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

Lear: What's that?

Kent: Authority.

Lear: What services canst thou do?

Kent: I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence.

Lear: How old are thou?

¹ *King Lear*, I. iv. 9-43.

Kent: Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything. I have years on my back forty eight.

Lear: Follow me; thou shalt serve me.

Launce, the "clownish servant" of Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, has lost his heart to a milk-maid, and in cataloguing her virtues, endows her with all the qualifications of a good maidservant. He avers she can milk, brew good ale, sew, knit, wash and scour, spin, and do many other things a good maid should.¹

Elizabethan masters and mistresses expected much more from those in their service than their counterparts of to-day. It would be difficult to imagine the chatelaine of some great country mansion nowadays calling upon her lady's maid for a song. Nor would a peer of the realm expect his valet to oblige him with a solo on the lute. Yet how often we find in Shakespeare's plays people in quite subordinate positions providing song and entertainment for their masters. These servants are distinct from the professional musicians and include playing and singing among their duties. Katharine of Arragon, sick and weary with worry, says to her maid, "Take thy lute, wench: my soul grows sad with troubles; Sing, and disperse 'em, if thou canst."² Brutus, haunted by forebodings in his tent at Sardis, calls upon his tired boy Lucius for music and a song.³ Feste, jester to Olivia's household and described as one of her servants, is an accomplished performer and responsible for "O Mistress Mine" and other delightful songs which add so much

¹ *Two Gentlemen*, III. 1. 302-20.

² *Henry VIII*, III. 1. 1-2.

³ *Julius Caesar*, IV. iii. 255-66.

to the charm of *Twelfth Night*. There are many others.

Music was a necessity to the Tudor home, and a much higher standard was reached by amateur performers than to-day, when so much of our music is mechanized. The musical side of one's education was considered second to none in importance; and nearly everybody who had been to school could sing and play one or two instruments, read at sight, and even compose. It must be borne in mind that in Shakespeare's day the English were decidedly a musical nation—perhaps the most musical nation in the world.

The demands on servants were not confined to singing and playing. At festival times they were often expected to provide for their lord entertainments of a more ambitious nature, if no company of professional actors was available. We hear of such an occasion from Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Talking, in her disguise as a page, with Silvia, she relates how:

at Pentecost,
When all our pageants of delight were play'd,
Our youth got me to play the woman's part.
 . . . 'twas Ariadne, passioning
For Theseus' perjury and unjust flight;
Which I so lively acted with my tears,
That my poor mistress, moved therewithal,
Wept bitterly.¹

The presentation of the Masque of the Nine Worthies before the Princess of France and the King of Navarre and their trains in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the performance of the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe by Quince,

¹ *Two Gentlemen*, IV. IV. 163-5, 172-6.

Bottom, and company in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are examples of these amateur shows given by servants and dependents.

The highest rank of servant, often of a station little inferior to that of the master and mistress themselves, was the personal attendant. It is this class of servant who is the most prominent in Shakespearean drama. As we have already noted, in many cases they are more companions and confidants than servants in the ordinary sense of the term. They are remarkably useful people in facilitating the art of playwriting, for they can be used to convey information to the audience, to throw light on the characters of the principal figures in the story, or to provide gay and humorous interludes where the atmosphere is too heavy.

The types of personal attendants which Shakespeare shows us are very numerous. Great ladies like the Princess of France in *Love's Labour's Lost* and Queen Katharine of Arragon would often have an aristocrat such as Boyet or a gentleman-usher such as Griffith to wait upon them, as well as an army of well-bred waiting-maids. Juliet has her Nurse in constant attendance; and as illustrating the various ranks among servants, it should be noted that the Nurse herself has her own attendant, Peter, who accompanies her when she goes abroad in the city and carries her fan for her.¹ Noble ladies such as Celia, Miranda, and Silvia, had the number of waiting-maids commensurate with their rank; and townswomen, like Mistress Page, went out with boys in attendance to carry their prayer-books to church or to struggle home with loaded baskets from the market. Pages always

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. IV.

accompanied gentlemen proceeding through the dark city streets at night, their principal duty being to hold the torch, which, except for the lights in shop windows, was their only means of finding the way.

Some personal servants, such as the Dromios¹ and Launce and Speed,² share their masters' adventures and often receive more kicks than ha'pence for their pains. Although such servants as these are of humble origin and should not be confused with the men and women of good family who attended the high and mighty, we note still a certain familiarity between them and their masters. Antipholus of Syracuse says to his servant, Dromio:

Because that I familiarly sometimes
Do use you for my fool, and chat with you,
Your sauciness will jest upon my love,
And make a common of my serious hours.³

Dromio has been guilty of the somewhat common fault in servants of taking advantage of his master's friendliness and consideration. He would have been wiser to keep his sauciness within bounds, for there was no law to prevent masters striking and beating their servants; and Dromio does, in fact, feel Antipholus's hand. His opposite number, Dromio of Ephesus, also complains of a cuffing he has received from Antipholus. "He struck so plainly," he says, "I could too well feel his blows. Nay, he's at two hands with me, and that my two ears can witness."⁴

Below the servants drawn from the ranks of gentle-

¹ *Comedy of Errors*.

³ *Comedy of Errors*, II. II. 26-9.

² *Two Gentlemen*.

⁴ *Ibid*, II. I. 45-6, 52-5.

folks and the personal attendants, there were other classes of a lower social order. Men and women of these classes were glad to enter service in the great mansions, for they enjoyed there a degree of comfort and a standard of living that were not possible in labouring occupations outside. They were under the management of the superior house servants, the steward, housekeeper, butler, and so on, and were divided into various groups according to their duties. One group would comprise the serving-men who waited at table in the great hall; another group would consist of the females who performed the work of housemaids upstairs; a third group would compose the extensive kitchen staff. Such a division of labour would characterize the staff in most gentlemen's houses, the numbers, of course, depending on the rank and wealth of the master. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Slender tells Anne Page, whom Shallow wishes him to marry, "I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead: but what though? yet I live like a poor gentleman born."¹ Slender directs his servant Simple to go to Master Page's house and wait upon his cousin, Shallow, who is dining there. Gentlemen's servants attended upon them when they dined out and waited at their host's table.

Capulet is served by a large staff of servants; and Shakespeare slyly creates the impression that the old man is rather a fussy individual, who has the troublesome habit of interfering with the domestic arrangements and producing something of a muddle by his efforts. Lady Capulet by comparison is easy-going and indifferent. A hint of the confusion in the household when Capulet

¹ *Merry Wives*, I. 1. 284-7.

is entertaining is gathered from the flurried servant's hasty message to his mistress, who has been placidly discussing Juliet with the Nurse in the chamber upstairs: "Madam, the guests are come, supper served up, you called, my young lady asked for, the nurse cursed in the pantry, and everything in extremity. I must hence to wait; I beseech you, follow straight."¹

And on the night before Juliet's wedding to Paris, her father sends his servants right and left on errands, grows excited over his orders, and does not propose to go to bed all night. Lady Capulet's anxious remark, "We shall be short in our provision," is a possible contretemps which puts the old gentleman in his element. He exclaims, "I'll not to bed to-night; let me alone; I'll play the housewife for this once."²

We have already pictured the great hall in Capulet's house, where a host of busy serving-men are hastily clearing away the dining furniture in preparation for the ball.³ "Away with the joint-stools," cries the head servant. "Remove the court-cupboard, look to the plate." The trestle tables are folded up and stacked against the wall, as Capulet with his guests enters, calling for more light and a quenching of the fire in the overheated room.

Another home in which we are allowed a peep at the household staff is Petruchio's country manor in *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁴ Petruchio sends on his "ancient, trusty, pleasant servant," Grumio, whom, however, he does not hesitate to strike when he annoys him, to make arrangements for his home-coming with

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. III. 100-3.

³ *Ibid.*, I. v.

² *Ibid.*, IV. II. 42-3.

⁴ IV. I.

his bride. The weather is cold, so the first demand Grumio makes of the head-servant, Curtis, is for a roaring fire of crackling logs. Then supper must be prepared, the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept; the serving-men must appear in their new fustian and white stockings, and every officer have his wedding garment on. "Be the jacks fair within, the jills fair without, the carpets laid (on the tables with the cups and trenchers), and every thing in order?" asks Grumio. A "jack" was a leather drinking vessel, and a "jill" a drinking vessel of metal. Grumio is making a play on the words, which could also mean the men and maidservants of the household.

Grumio calls the grooms together with orders to smarten themselves up, while four or five serving-men prepare the meal. But when Petruchio arrives, it is part of his scheme for taming Katharine to be horribly disagreeable and find fault with everything. He grumbles at the "logger-headed and unpolished grooms"; he censures Grumio for not meeting him in his park with the stable staff, as he directed; he strikes the boy who helps him off with his riding-boots and the other boy who lets the basin of water fall; he curses at Peter who brings in the meal:¹

What's this? mutton? . . .

'Tis burnt; and so is all the meat.

What dogs are these! where is the rascal cook?

How durst you, villains, bring it from the dresser,

And serve it thus to me that love it not?

There, take it to you, trenchers, cups, and all:

[*Throws the meat, etc., about the stage.*]

You heedless jolthead and unmanner'd slaves!

¹ IV. i. 163-9.

In spite of such treatment, which, unlike Petruchio's, was often in earnest, servants as a whole showed remarkable loyalty and fidelity to their employers. Old Adam's long and faithful service to the house of de Boys in *As You Like It*, ending with his shameful treatment at the hands of Oliver, is typical of the attitude of the old retainers. Even when their master fell into disfavour, their constancy was not shaken. When Posthumus was banished by Cymbeline, his servant, Pisanio, continued to serve him, even at the risk of his own life. When disaster and bankruptcy overtake Timon of Athens, it is his steward's unpleasant duty to dismiss the staff. In spite of their misfortune, one of them declares, "Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery."¹ Shakespeare's plays contain numerous instances of the steadfast allegiance of servants to their lord, which was characteristic of feudal England.

A perusal of old household accounts shows that it was customary for servants to have all their clothes provided. Liveries were an important item in the home budget, and dresses, shoes, and aprons for the maid-servants figure among the entries. Serving-men in aristocratic families generally wore blue liveries, consisting of a doublet with loose, hanging shoulder-sleeves, on which their master's arms were embroidered, and gartered stockings. On other occasions a badge of silver fastened to the left arm proclaimed the master whom thy served. Servants of dignitaries of the church wore tawny coats. It may be remembered that in the scrap between Cardinal Beaufort's men and the servants of the Duke of Gloucester in

¹ *Timon of Athens*, IV. ii. 17.

Henry VI, Part I, Duke Humphrey calls to his followers:

Draw, men, for all this privileged place;
Bluecoats to tawny coats.¹

Petruchio's men are ordered to await the home-coming of their master and his bride in their new fustian (a coarse cloth made of cotton and flax), with their white stockings on, their garters correctly tied, their blue coats brushed, and their hair sleekly combed.² When Petruchio is angry because the grooms have not met him in the park according to his instructions, his head-servant, Grumio, makes excuses for them:³

Nathaniel's coat, sir, was not fully made,
And Gabriel's pumps were all unpink'd⁴ i' the heel,
There was no link⁵ to colour Peter's hat,
And Walter's dagger was not come from sheathing.⁶

From all accounts, domestics were well provided for in most homes. In *King Lear*, Edgar as "poor Tom," the Bedlam beggar, describes his former position as a servant, when he had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, a horse to ride, and a weapon to wear.⁷

Tipping was as general as it is to-day. Those familiar with Shakespearean drama will recall many instances where a purse is given in gratitude for a useful service rendered or the bringing of good tidings. Charity was expected of the wealthy, for since the habitual dispensing

¹ 1. iii. 46-7.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. 1. 49-50, 93-5.

⁴ Unornamented.

⁶ Having a new sheath made for it.

⁷ *King Lear*, III. iv. 87, 141-3.

³ *Ibid.*, 135-8.

⁵ Blacking.

of alms by the monks had ended with the dissolution of the monasteries, the aristocrats, who had succeeded to much of the monastic treasure, had to shoulder this burden themselves. Elizabeth's reign, however, saw the beginnings of Poor Law administration. There was much indignation when a service went unrewarded. An amusing case is that of the Old Lady who brings the news of the birth of Anne Boleyn's daughter to King Henry VIII, and is highly dissatisfied with her reward of a hundred marks.

An hundred marks! By this light, I'll ha' more.
An ordinary groom is for such payment.
I will have more, or scold it out of him.
Said I for this, the girl was like to him?
I will have more, or else unsay't; and now,
While it is hot, I'll put it to the issue.¹

Coming from the general to the particular, we notice, first of all, the steward. He was the head of the household and a very important person, especially in his own estimation. In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia's steward, Malvolio, takes his duties very seriously and is much disliked by those under him. Some idea of his authority may be gathered from his rebuke even of Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's uncle, for disturbing the quiet of the house with a tipsy ballad. The steward was often entrusted with the money for the household accounts and held responsible for debts and payments. Flavius, the steward of Timon of Athens, tried in vain to curb his master's extravagance and ward off the inevitable bankruptcy. His wise handling of the affairs of the household was, however, defeated by Timon's recklessness. Sometimes

¹ *Henry VIII*, v. 1. 171-6.

stewards were too loyal to their instructions and obeyed where they should have protested. A striking instance is the intolerable behaviour of the steward Oswald towards King Lear at the bidding of his mistress, Goneril. In some of Shakespeare's great mansions—Rousillon in *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example—the steward puts in an appearance even where he has no important rôle to enact. As a player who frequently visited the households of the great, the poet was, no doubt, extremely familiar with this dignified functionary.

The butler held a high position on the staff and superintended the waiters. He presided in the buttery and was responsible for the wine cellar. His principal duty was to attend the high table at meal-times and replenish the silver goblets, or the new glasses which were now rapidly replacing them. In the households of kings and great nobles the cupbearer might himself be a person of rank. In *The Winter's Tale*, for example, Camillo, a Sicilian lord, is appointed cupbearer to the royal guest, Polixenes of Bohemia. Stephano, King Alonso's butler in *The Tempest*, on the other hand, is anything but an exalted person, and seems more likely to consume the royal cellar than stand guard over it.

The cook was lord of the kitchen, and had a large staff of boy scullions and kitchen wenches under him. On special occasions he was assisted by extra cooks, who were paid about three shillings per banquet. Capulet orders:

So many guests invite as here are writ.
Sirrah, go hire me twenty cunning cooks.¹

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. ii. 1-2.

According to Harrison, in the houses of the nobility these cunning cooks were for the most part "musical-headed Frenchmen and strangers."¹

In *The Comedy of Errors*, Dromio of Syracuse gives a long description of a kitchen wench, who has laid amatory claim to him in mistake for his brother. She is, it seems, typical of the kitchen worker, hot, greasy, ragged, grimy. She wanted to use Dromio to turn the roasting spit in front of the fire, as tramps were employed, and sometimes dogs.

In addition to the Porter, who guarded the entrance to the mansion from his windows in the gatehouse, and the outside staff of grooms and gardeners, there was a group of servants retained specially to entertain their master or mistress. The chief of these was the professional fool, or jester, wearing his motley uniform of red and yellow with the coxcomb hood. The fool was allowed a certain amount of licence in what he said to raise a laugh. But, woe betide him if his joke fell flat, or gave offence, for he was quite likely to be soundly thrashed. Touchstone is the most famous of the court fools in Shakespeare, though the Fool in *King Lear* is a character of more depth, which is only imperfectly understood by most of us. Feste of *Twelfth Night* entertains as much by his music and singing as by his drolleries; but Trinculo in *The Tempest* is rather a poor creature, with little wit, and readily subservient to the drunken butler, Stephano. Fools were often on friendly terms with their employer's family. Hamlet, musing over the skull of Yorick, his father's jester, recalls how, when he was a boy, Yorick would play with him, give

¹ *Description of England.*

him pickapacks, and kiss him. "A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," he tells Horatio, with "flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar."¹

Servants were expected to play and sing for their employers' entertainment in addition to their other duties; but in large households professional musicians were retained and formed part of the resident staff. Other minstrels were engaged for weddings and like occasions; and companies of strolling players offered their services at castle and manor and gave their performances in return for board and lodging and some small emolument.

Such was the large and varied staff of the Elizabethan home, differing in numbers and composition according to the size of the mansion and the wealth and rank of the owner. Each great house was a community in itself, largely self-supporting, and relying upon its own resources for supply, business, and entertainment.

¹ *Hamlet*, v. i. 204, 210.

CHAPTER V

MEAL-TIMES

THERE are few more important events in home life than meal-times. Meals divide up the day into convenient sections and compel even those who are indifferent to the pleasures of the table to take notice of them. But nowadays there are not many of these indifferent people about, and, to judge from the records, there were fewer still in the reign of Elizabeth.

The general rule for the Queen and the majority of her subjects, certainly the well-to-do classes, was three meals a day—breakfast, dinner and supper. In that very comprehensive work, *A Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth*, William Harrison tells us that there was a tendency to eat fewer meals than formerly. Busy people dispensed with breakfast and contented themselves with dinner and supper only, except, to use his own words, "here and there some young hungry stomach that cannot fast till dinner time."

Although the Elizabethans, or some of them, cut down the number of their meals, they managed, nevertheless, to do themselves extremely well. "These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt," said the Spaniards during the reign of Elizabeth's predecessor; "but they fare commonly so well as the king." To quote from William Harrison again: "In number of dishes and change of meat the nobility of England (whose cooks are for the most part musical-headed Frenchmen and strangers) do most exceed, sith there

is no day in manner that passeth over their heads wherein they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, cony, capon, pig, or so many as the season yieldeth, but also some portion of the red or fallow deer, beside great variety of fish and wild fowl, and thereto sundry other delicacies wherein the sweet hand of the seafaring Portugal is not wanting."

We turn to another writer of the age, a somewhat sour-minded, acid-tongued critic of his contemporaries, called Philip Stubbes. In his *Anatomie of Abuses*¹ Stubbes smites the Elizabethans hip and thigh for their conceits and frailties, and on this question of feeding deplors the fact that "nowadays, if the table be not covered from one end to the other as thick as one dish can stand by another, and to every dish a several sauce appropriate to its kind, it is thought unworthy of the name of dinner."

It is chronicled that at the court of Elizabeth a single course consisted of twenty-four dishes. And not only did hosts and guests fare well: in most of the great houses the staff of servants enjoyed a high standard of living. "Even for our kitchens we kill the fowl of season," says Isabella in *Measure for Measure*.² The diet was usually different to that served at the high table. Servants did finish up what was left, but with the appetites of the gentry what they were, this by itself was rather too precarious a subsistence!

Foodstuffs were brought to London by cart and packhorse in the early morning in time for market. It is only two o'clock when the carriers in *Henry IV*, Part I, leave the inn yard at Rochester. One says, "I have a gammon of bacon and two razes³ of ginger to

¹ 1583.

² II. ii. 84.

³ Roots of unpulverized ginger.

be delivered as far as Charing-cross.”¹ The other has his pannier full of turkeys.

Market prices varied according to the season and the harvest. The price of bread was fixed by the municipal authorities; and the weight of the loaf or the number of gallons of beer to be sold for a penny fluctuated with the price of wheat and barley.

A guide as to the charges for poultry is supplied by a table compiled for the Court of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London in 1572. Incidentally the list includes a number of birds we do not now consider delicacies. Cranes were 6s. each; storks, 4s.; and herons, 2s. 6d. The smaller bitterns were 2s. each; blackbirds, 1s. a dozen; larks, 8d. a dozen; and gulls, 1s. 8d. each. The best swans were priced at 6s. 8d. and cygnets at 6s. A capon could be bought for 1s. Beef was 2d. a pound; eggs were four and five for a penny, and the best butter only 3d. a pound.

Coming to 1589, beef was then only three farthings a pound. A leg of mutton cost 1s. 6d., and a neck, 6d. Sugar was at the high figure of 20s. a pound; pepper was 4s. a pound; and salt, three bushels for 6d.² The higher purchasing power of money must, of course, be taken into account.

In spite of this generous supply of all kinds of foods, some at low prices, fasting and dieting were not unknown to the Elizabethans. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*³ Speed tells his master, Valentine, that he can tell he is in love by various outward signs, one of which is that he

¹ *Henry IV*, Part I, II. i. 26-8.

² Quoted from *Shakespeare's England*, II. 136. *The Home* (Percy MacQuoid).

³ II. i. 25.

has learned "to fast like one that takes diet." In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the King of Navarre takes his clown, Costard, to task for consorting with a woman in violation of the strict ascetism which the king has imposed upon his followers. "You shall fast a week with bran and water" is the sentence pronounced upon him. "I had rather pray a month with mutton and porridge" is the irrepressible Costard's reply.¹

Considering each meal of the day more particularly, we make a natural start with breakfast, which compared with the modern domestic time-table was a very early meal. Country people then rose with the sun, and before sunrise in winter; and even gentlefolk would be up for breakfast by 6.30.

As Harrison has told us, many went without breakfast altogether; and in any case it was quite a light meal in most households. The travellers in *Henry IV*, Part I, who, we hear, are preparing for their journey from Rochester to London while it is still dark, call for eggs and butter for their breakfast.²

Bread was an essential item in the provisions for breakfast and every other meal. The French physician, Stephen Perlin, praised its quality and said of the English, "They use much whiter bread than in France, and it was in my time as cheap as in France."³ Harrison is not so enthusiastic. He writes: "The bread throughout the land is made of such grain as the soil yieldeth, nevertheless, the gentility commonly provide themselves sufficiently of wheat for their own tables, whilst their household and poor neighbours (in some shires) are inforced to

¹ I. i. 302-5.

² I *Henry IV*, II. i. 65.

³ *Description of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland*.



SERVANTS AT THE BAKE HOUSE

(From a woodcut in the Series of Satirical Prints entitled "Tittle-Tattle, or the several branches of Gossiping")

content themselves with rye, or barley, yea, and in the time of dearth (many) with bread made either of beans, peason, or oats."¹ Beggars, according to Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*,² ate brown bread and garlic from a "clack-dish," that is, a wooden box or dish with a lid, which was clacked by beggars when appealing for contributions.³ The price of bread being fixed by the authorities was low; but Jack Cade, the agitator, makes a wild promise to fix it lower still and vows, "There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny."⁴ The "cob-loaf," mentioned by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*,⁵ was a large "crusty, uneven loaf with a round top to it."⁶ According to Hentzer, the Elizabethans ate but a small quantity of bread in proportion to their huge helpings of meat.

A morning draught of ale, beer, wine, or spirits was taken with or without breakfast. The habit prevailed long before Shakespeare's time, and Doctor Venner⁷ writes of it: "The custom of drinking in the morning's fasting, a large draught of white wine, or of beer, hath almost with all men so far prevailed, as that they judge it a principal means for the preservation of their health."

In an account of entertainments in the Temple at Christmas, 1561-2, the breakfast fare consisted of brawn, mustard, and malmsey. The Tewkesbury mustard, ground and made into balls, was then sold as "the best that the world affords." Falstaff, sneering at Poins, declares "his wit's as thick as Tewkesbury mustard."⁸

¹ *Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth.*

² III. ii. 134, 195.

³ *New English Dictionary.*

⁴ *2 Henry VI*, IV. ii. 70-1.

⁵ II. i. 41.

⁶ *Temple Shakespeare.*

⁷ *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam*, 1637.

⁸ *2 Henry IV*, II. iv. 262.

Malmsey was a sweet wine which we shall notice again when we come to list the wines and beverages of the day.

Although breakfast was a minor meal with most of her subjects, the Queen herself appears to have been confronted with an imposing array of dishes. We learn that at a royal breakfast ale, beer, and wine were served with meal bread and butter, and a stew of mutton, beef, and veal, as well as rabbits and poultry.

The great meal, and in some cases the first meal, of the day was dinner. The most popular time for dinner was from 11 o'clock to 12 noon. Harrison is again our guide on this question. "The nobility, gentry, and students," he says, "do ordinarily go to dinner at eleven before noon." Out of term-time the students at the university appear to have advanced their dinner hour to ten o'clock. The merchants seldom had their meal before midday, and the husbandmen dined also "at high noon, as they call it." In *The Comedy of Errors* the master of the house, not having returned by noon, is very late for dinner; and Dromio of Ephesus laments:¹

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell;
My mistress made it one upon my cheek:
She is so hot, because the meat is cold;
The meat is cold, because you come not home.

In Capulet's house they dined unusually early. It is nine o'clock when the Nurse goes to meet Romeo with Juliet's message, and Romeo's friends leave him saying they are going to his father's house: "We'll to dinner thither."² Half an hour later, when the Nurse returns

¹ 1. ii. 44-8.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 148.

to Juliet in Capulet's orchard, she asks the girl, "What, have you dined at home?"¹ and once her news is told, is anxious to go to her dinner.

Petruchio, suggesting that he and Katharine should travel to her father's house, says:

Let's see; I think 'tis now some seven o'clock,
And well we may come there by dinner-time.

Petruchio means seven o'clock in the morning, but Katharine corrects him:

I dare assure you, sir, 'tis almost two;
And 'twill be supper-time ere you come there.²

Dinner might follow a morning spent in the chase. In *King Lear* Goneril tells her steward to prepare dinner on hearing the horns of the returning huntsmen.³ In *Measure for Measure* Escalus, after a sitting of Angelo's court, asks the Justice what time it is. On learning that it is eleven o'clock, he immediately invites the lawyer to come home to dinner with him.⁴ Dinner was the meal to which casual invitations were given to chance-met friends, whereas for supper special preparations were made. Hosts and guests lingered long, sometimes hours, over the meal.

Nearly all the meats, fish, game, fruits, and vegetables with which we are familiar to-day appear to have figured on the Elizabethan dinner-table. Enormous quantities of everything were provided, and no expense was spared in obtaining the richest and most exotic delicacies. That

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. v. 46.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. III. 189-93.

³ I. III. 26.

⁴ II. I. 292.

loquacious visitor to our shores, Paul Hentzner, was particularly impressed by the perfection with which the English roasted their meats. Chief among these as dinner foods were beef, mutton, and veal. The roast beef of old England was famous even three and a half centuries ago. Shakespeare puts the following dialogue into the mouth of the French enemy on the eve of Agincourt:¹

Constable of France: Give them great meals of beef, and iron and steel, they will eat like wolves and fight like devils.

Orleans: Ay, but these English are shrewdly out of beef.²

Constable: Then shall we find to-morrow they have only stomachs to eat and none to fight.

Writing of the staple meats of the country, the traveller and historian, Fynes Moryson,³ said: "England abounds in cattle of all kinds, and particularly hath very great oxen, the flesh whereof is so tender, as no meat is more desired." Further on he remarks, "The flesh of the hogs and swine is more savoury than in any other parts, excepting the bacon of Westphalia."

The disposition in the royal palace to serve dinner on the grand scale is shown in a typical menu prepared for the Queen. Her Majesty had two courses; and these consisted mainly of meats, veal pies, swans or geese, herons, partridges or pheasants, rabbits, chickens, capons, plovers, larks, and "sallets," or salads, and various sweetmeats.

Gentlemen and merchants fared about the same, according to Harrison, and their dinner consisted of

¹ *Henry V*, III. vii. 161-9. ⁴

² Suffering keenly from lack of beef.

³ 1566-1630.

four, five, or six dishes, when their guests were few in number, and of one, two, or three, at the most, when they dined alone. The usual meats, game, and their et cetera would be served at these meals. The dinner in the Temple on Christmas Day, 1561-2, for example, had roast beef and venison pasties as the principal items on the bill of fare. Master Page of Windsor, a citizen of the middle class, extends the following welcome invitation to Sir John Falstaff and his friends to join him at his board: "Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner." Anne Page comes out of the house to offer wine to the guests, but her father checks her, "Nay, daughter, carry the wine in; we'll drink within."¹

Shakespeare mentions some of the common dishes for dinner in a passage in *Much Ado About Nothing*. When Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel, thus fulfilling his promise to Beatrice, the Prince of Arragon misunderstands his whisper in Claudio's ear, and asks, "What, a feast, a feast?" And Claudio gives rein to his wit in this reply: "I' faith, I thank him; he hath bid me to a calf's-head and a capon; the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock, too?"² The point of Claudio's remark is that calf's-head, capon, and woodcock were not only dishes that contributed to most feasts, but also types of stupidity.

Part of Petruchio's plan for taming his shrewish wife, Katharine, is to keep her short of food. The famished woman begs her husband's servant, Grumio,

¹ *Merry Wives*, I. i. 195, 202.

² *Much Ado*, V. i. 154-8.

to get her a meal, no matter what, so long as it is wholesome.

Grumio: What say you to a neat's¹ foot?

Katharine: 'Tis passing good. I prithee let me have it.

Grumio: I fear it is too cholerick a meat.

How say you to a fat tripe finely broil'd?

Katharine: I like it well: good Grumio, fetch it me.

Grumio: I cannot tell; I fear 'tis cholerick.

What say you to a piece of beef and mustard?

Katharine: A dish that I do love to feed upon.

Grumio: Ay, but the mustard is too hot a little.

Katharine: Why then, the beef, and let the mustard rest.²

But Katharine has to go without her dinner, for Petruchio has given orders which Grumio dare not disobey.

Shakespeare makes passing references to many other dishes which graced an Elizabethan dinner table. Biondello speaks of a wench who "went to the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit."³ While rabbits, particularly stuffed rabbits, were popular, there was a curious idea that to partake of hare was to engender melancholy. Hares were eaten, nevertheless. Ox tongue, described as "a neat's tongue dried";⁴ caviare, a fashionable delicacy, then quite new and known only to the wealthy, alluded to in *Hamlet*⁵; sheep's heart, mentioned by Rosalind;⁶ prawns, which tempted Falstaff;⁷ a "dish of doves" brought by Old Gobbo for his son's master;⁸ carbonado, that is, meat cut across to be broiled—all these, and many more, have their notice in the plays as evidence of their popularity at the time.

¹ Ox.

³ *Ibid.*, IV. IV. 100-1.

⁵ II. II. 457.

⁷ 2 *Henry IV*, II. I. 104.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. III. 16-26.

⁴ *Merchant of Venice*, I. I. 112.

⁶ *As You Like It*, III. II. 444.

⁸ *Merchant of Venice*, II. II. 144.

While all the meats were served with their appropriate sauces, vegetables occupied an important place in the bill of fare. Percy MacQuoid writes: "Cabbages and beans were plentiful, carrots and radishes cost 2d. a bunch, and a cucumber 2d., onions 2d. a rope, olives 1s. a pint."¹ Mushrooms, "a dangerous fruit" according to Harrison, were much in favour; and Shakespeare records the use of salads, green peas, and potatoes. Artichokes, costing more than a penny each, were generously eaten, as also were turnips, leeks, parsley, and lettuce. Mint and savory were used for seasoning.

The word "potato" is apt to mislead us. It is employed generally by the Elizabethans for the yam or sweet potato, which was introduced by Sir John Hawkins. These vegetables were supposed to have the same effect as a love potion, which is the reason why Sir John Falstaff, when keeping his assignation with the Merry Wives in Windsor Park, cries, "Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of *Green Sleeves*, hail kissing-comfits, and snow eringoes."² Eringoes, or candied roots of sea holly, were believed to have the same effect as the yam; and kissing-comfits were "perfumed sugar-plums, used by women to sweeten the breath."³ *Green Sleeves* was a popular love ballad of the day.

The potato with which we are now so familiar was introduced into England by the enterprise of Sir Walter Raleigh only about the middle of Elizabeth's reign. It made its way slowly and was not home-grown in any considerable quantity until much later. When Shakespeare wrote, it was still a great luxury, and even in King

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 138.

² *Merry Wives*, v. v 20-2.

³ *New Cambridge Shakespeare*.

James's time cost as much as 2s. a lb., or nearly a sovereign in our money. The "potato," then, always meant the yam or sweet potato, and the new importation, to-day a necessary on every table, was known to all as the "Virginian."

Sweets were of various kinds: many-coloured jellies and custards, cakes, and "sugar-meats" or comfits. Of the cakes gingerbread was perhaps the most popular. Biscuits from Naples were also much liked; and Shakespeare speaks of marchpane in *Romeo and Juliet*, where one of the servants asks for a bit to be saved for him as they are busily clearing away Capulet's feast.¹ Marchpane was a kind of almond paste and was made of pounded almonds, pistachio nuts, sugar, and flour, with various essences. Its decoration and shape were often weird and wonderful. Sugar-plate was another dainty sweetmeat. It was made, according to MacQuoid, "by taking 'gum dragon' and laying it in rose-water for two days, after which powder of sugar was added, with the juice of an orange, beaten into a paste and moulded."² Another thing which delighted the sweet-tooths was sugar sops, which were steeped "slices of bread, sweetened and spiced."³ Roots of sea holly, called "eringoes" by Shakespeare and mentioned above as possessing the same love properties as the yam, were candied and formed another favourite sweet. There were other candied delicacies. Ginger found a place in all store-cupboards, with pepper, nutmeg, cloves, mace, Tewkesbury mustard, and other condiments.

Fruits of many sorts, both cooked and fresh, added

¹ I. v. 9.

² *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 137.

³ *Ibid.*

their appetizing appeal to the dinner menu. We hear of stewed prunes from both Slender¹ and Doll Tearsheet,² of roasted crab apples from Puck,³ and wardenes, or baking pears, from the Clown in *The Winter's Tale*.⁴ Shakespeare also records for us this imposing list of fruits: apples, pears, plums, medlars, quinces, apricots, pomegranates, cherries grown chiefly in Kent, figs which did well in some parts of England; also blackberries, mulberries, dewberries, bilberries, strawberries, which appear to have ripened as early as May; and of the nut family, almonds, chestnuts, hazel nuts, and walnuts. Oranges were imported from Spain and sold in the streets at seven for twopence. Shakespeare mentions an orange-wife in *Coriolanus*;⁵ and Beatrice, declaring Claudio is "civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion,"⁶ puns on the word Seville, whence most of the oranges came. The "apple-john," which Falstaff could not endure,⁷ was a special kind of apple which shrivelled up when kept but gained in flavour. Grapes were grown with some degree of success in the south of England and appeared on many a banquet table. The attempt to make wine from them, however, failed before the strong competition of the wine industry of France.

Then, as now, cheese would be the last course at dinner. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Parson Evans, who enjoys his food, objects to being interrupted by Simple and sends him away with a letter and the words, "I pray you, be gone: I will make an end of my dinner;

¹ *Merry Wives*, I. i. 296.

² *2 Henry IV*, II. iv. 159.

³ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 48.

⁴ IV. iii. 48.

⁵ II. i. 78.

⁶ *Much Ado*, II. i. 304.

⁷ *2 Henry IV*, II. iv. 2.

there's pippins and cheese to come."¹ The parson was Welsh; and cheese was known as a favourite dish of Welsh people generally. It is not surprising, therefore, that we hear a good deal about it in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Master Ford, for example, declares, in his jealous and suspicious mood, he would sooner trust Parson Evans with his cheese than his wife with herself.² In the Windsor Park scene, when Falstaff discovers that the Welshman has been one of those who have so easily made a fool of him, he exclaims, "'Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese."³ In the same play Bardolph says contemptuously to Slender: "You Banbury cheese!"⁴ This is not a reflection on his quality, for the best cheeses in England were then made at Banbury, although Cheshire cheese was not unknown. The point of Bardolph's remark is that Banbury cheeses were distinguished for their remarkable thinness, an apt epithet for the slender Slender.

Although Shakespeare makes no reference to the fact, it had become the custom, since Hawkins and Raleigh introduced tobacco, for most Elizabethan gentlemen to retire for an after-dinner smoke. Harrison writes, "In these days the taking-in of the smoke of the Indian herb called tobacco by an instrument formed like a little ladle, whereby it passeth from the mouth into the head and stomach, is greatly taken up and used in England, against rheums and some other diseases engendered in the lungs." But one had to be fairly well off to indulge, for tobacco cost five shillings an ounce, equivalent to £2 in present money values.

¹ I. ii. 11-13.

² v. v. 147.

³ II. ii. 317.

⁴ I. i. 130.

So far we have described only the eatables on the Elizabethan menu. Now we will turn to the wine list. According to Harrison, about forty-six sorts of light wine and thirty kinds of stronger wine were drunk by his contemporaries. Some of it, but not much, was made from fruits grown on the larger country estates. The greater part was imported from France, Spain, Italy, and other foreign countries.

The prominence of "sack," the generic name for Spanish and Canary vintage, is remarkable. Shakespeare speaks only once of claret wine; upwards of fifty times he refers to sack. Sack was the fashionable beverage of the gentry, as home-brewed ale was the common drink of the people. But the lower classes drank sack eagerly enough when they could get hold of it. Stephano in *The Tempest* salves a hogshead from the wreck and shares it with intoxicating effect with Trinculo and Caliban. Hostess Quickly knew it well and says of the Canary species, "That's a marvellous searching wine, and it perfumes the blood ere one can say 'What's this?'"¹

The great exponent of sack-drinking is, of course, Sir John Falstaff. A tavern bill found in his pocket shows that his supper consists principally of sack, which costs more than the rest of the meal put together. This tavern bill, incidentally, gives the correct current price of sack, namely, two gallons for 5s. 8d.

In the Second Part of *Henry IV* the bibulous knight discourses at length on the benefits of his favourite drink and has some illuminating things to say about it. "A good sherris-sack hath a twofold operation in

¹ 2 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 30.

it," he tells us. "It ascends me into the brain; dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes; which, delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second property of your excellent sherris is, the warming of the blood; which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice; but the sherris warms it and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme; it illumineth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage; and this valour comes of sherris. So that skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work; and learning a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil, till sack commences it and sets it in act and use."¹ Sack was among the ales and wines which formed the "morning draught," of which the Elizabethans partook generally and generously.

Although sack was a sweet wine, it was customary to put sugar with it, proving, once more, the sweet tooth of the Elizabethans. Sir John Sack and Sugar is one of Poins's names for Falstaff.² "Burnt sack," which Ford directs mine host of the Garter Inn to serve when he calls upon Falstaff in the disguise of Master Brook,³ was a hot drink of sack with sugar added. On returning to his inn after his ducking in the Thames, Falstaff

¹ *2 Henry IV*, iv. iii. 103-26.

² *1 Henry IV*, i. ii. 125.

³ *Merry Wives*, ii. i. 223.

sends Bardolph for a quart of sack; and "put a toast in 't," he calls after him.¹ Bardolph returns with two cups of sack. Falstaff pours it in to the Thames water he has swallowed, but wants some more. "Take away these chalices," he orders. "Go brew me a pottle of sack finely." (A pottle was a tankard holding two quarts.) "With eggs, sir?" asks Bardolph. Falstaff shakes his head: "Simple of itself; I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage"² (drink brewed).

"You rogue!" Falstaff exclaims at Francis, the drawer at the Boar's Head. "Here's lime in this sack."³ A dishonest practice of unscrupulous tavern keepers was to add lime to inferior wine. Presumably it was a preservative. In his *Voyages* Sir Richard Hawkins stated that the Spanish sacks "for conservation are mingled with the lime in the making." This, he said, gave rise to "the stone, the dropsy, and infinite other distempers, not heard of before this wine came into frequent use."

Other wines popular at the time were claret, alicant, muscadel, Rhenish, and charneco. Alicant was a red, Spanish wine taking its name from Alicante, its place of origin. Muscadel was a sweet wine which bridal parties were accustomed to drink at the conclusion of a wedding, and, therefore, appropriately called for by Petruchio after his marriage to Katharine.⁴ Rhenish, imbibed to excess at the court of Claudius of Denmark⁵ and drunk in large quantities by the Germans,⁶ was the white wine which came from the provinces of the Rhine. Salarino tells Shylock there is more difference

¹ *Merry Wives*, III. v. 3.

² *Henry IV.* II. iv. 137-9.

³ *Hamlet*, I. iv. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III. v. 21-32.

⁵ *Taming of the Shrew*, III. ii. 174.

⁶ *Merchant of Venice*, I. ii. 104.

between his blood and that of his daughter, Jessica, than there is between red wine and Rhenish.¹ Charneco, mentioned by Shakespeare in the Second Part of *Henry VI*,² was a kind of port which was made at a village near Lisbon.

Bastard was a wine of poor quality served in taverns. "Why, then, your brown bastard is your only drink,"³ says Prince Hal to Francis, the drawer at the Boar's Head. Brown bastard was a sweet wine made from raisins; it was imported from Spain.

We come across some strange names of wines in the following dialogue from *Love's Labour's Lost*:⁴

Biron: White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.

Princess: Honey, and milk, and sugar; there is three.

Biron: Nay, then, two treys⁵—and if you grow so nice—
Metheglin, wort, and malmsey; well run, dice!
There's half a dozen sweets.

Metheglin, mentioned also in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,⁶ was a variety of mead, a drink made of honey and water fermented. Malmsey, which was much drunk at the time, was a strong sweet wine of high flavour. In *Richard III*,⁷ the body of the murdered Duke of Clarence is concealed in a malmsey-butt. Wort was sweet, unfermented beer.

Harrison says that in rich men's houses drink was served in silver bowls and in fine Venetian glasses, and elsewhere in coloured pottery jugs and crocks, sometimes tipped with silver, or pewter. "The Venice

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, III. 1. 42-4.

² *Henry IV*, II. IV. 82.

³ Threes in dice or cards.

⁴ II. iii. 63.

⁵ V. II. 230-4.

⁶ I. IV. 161.

⁷ V. v. 167.

glasses," he writes, "are now preferred to silver by the more fashionable."

Beer, brewed of barley, water, and hops, which had first been introduced into England in the reign of Henry VIII, was rapidly becoming the national drink. Hentzner remarks, "The general drink is beer, which is prepared from barley, and is excellently well tasted, strong, and what soon fuddles."¹ Harrison describes how his wife and her maidservants brewed in his household once a month "three hogsheads of good beer, as is meet for poor men as I am."

The pint-pot for beer was the national measure and is mentioned by Shakespeare in Part I of *Henry IV*.² Perlin in his *Description of England and Scotland* wrote that beer was drunk, "not in glasses, but in earthenware pots of which the handles are of silver, and the cover; and this in houses where they are rather rich. For among the poor the covers of the beer-pots are merely pewter, and in some places above villages the beer-pots are only of wood. . . . With their beer they have a custom of using very soft cakes, in which there are raisins, and which makes you find the double beer very good; and I have had formerly at the Rye, a seaport, as good as ever I drank in any country of the world."

Ale made from an infusion of malt was sold at ale-houses. Christopher Sly, the tinker, waking from his drunken slumber in the luxurious bedroom of the Lord's house, cries, "For God's sake, a pot of small ale." The servant, however, in accordance with the practical joke they are playing upon him, counters with, "Will

¹ *Travels in England during the Reign of Elizabeth*.

² II. IV. 438.

't please your lordship drink a cup of sack?" Sly replies, "I ne'er drank sack in my life";¹ which was very probable. Sack was expensive and beyond the means of the labouring classes. For the same reason, when he is offered "conserves" (preserves), he rejects them and says he is only interested in "conserves of beef." And Sly calls upon "the fat ale-wife of Wincot" to substantiate his statements.

A bowl of ale, to which a toast and some spice and sugar were added, produced what was called "lamb's wool." A roasted crab-apple was sometimes put in as well. Brandy is always "aqua-vitae" in Shakespeare. It was aqua-vitae to Juliet's Nurse;² and Ford declares he would trust an Irishman with his aqua-vitae bottle as another thing he would do before trusting his wife with herself.³ A curious word encountered in *Love's Labour's Lost*,⁴ and which has not yet been explained quite convincingly, is "flap-dragon." Perhaps this was our Christmas game of snapdragon—raisins put in burning brandy.

Besides the beer and ale, country folk drank cider or pommage, particularly in the West Country. Ewe's milk was also a common drink and is mentioned in the pastoral scene of *The Winter's Tale*.⁵ Tea, that great standby of the working classes of to-day, was not known to the Elizabethans. Not until the East India Company, which was granted its charter by the Queen on December 31, 1600, had been trading for half a century did supplies of tea reach England in any considerable quantities. It

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Ind. Sc. 2.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii. 88.

⁴ V. i. 319.

³ *Merry Wives*, II. ii. 319.

⁵ IV. iv. 461.

was the same with coffee. The middle of the seventeenth century had passed before coffee had become sufficiently popular as a beverage to justify the opening of the first coffee-house.

And now to the last meal of the day, called supper. Supper time with the wealthy and leisured classes was about 5.30. University students also supped at the same hour. It was generally six o'clock before the merchants were ready for their evening meal; and the rural workers after their long day in the fields came in at seven and even eight o'clock. These times are confirmed by Shakespeare. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, for example, the King of Navarre, reading out a letter from the fantastical Don Armado, includes this passage: "About the sixth hour, when beasts most graze, birds best peck, and men sit down to that nourishment which is called supper."¹ Bassanio, again, intending to feed his "best-esteem'd acquaintance," gives orders to his servant, "Let it be so hasted, that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the clock."²

Supper was a more formal meal than dinner in so far that guests received definite invitations and did not drop in casually, as they often did for the midday dinner. In *Henry VI*, Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, sends his serving-man specially to invite the Lords of Warwick and Salisbury to sup with him on the morrow.³

The fare provided for supper was ordinarily the same as that for dinner, except that it was not so elaborate. Justice Shallow sets before his old crony, Falstaff, a supper of young pigeons, a couple of short-legged

¹ 1. i. 240.

² *Merchant of Venice*, 11. ii. 121-3.

³ 2 *Henry VI*, 1. iv. 83-4.

hens, a joint of mutton, and "pretty little tiny kickshaws."¹ Kickshaws were small supplementary dishes, highly flavoured. "Leather-coats," or brown russet apples, are also on the menu; and the amount of sack disposed of is prodigious.² Mutton and hens roasted comprised the supper in the Temple for Christmas Day, 1561-2; and Beatrice refers to the preference for game at this meal in *Much Ado About Nothing*.³ We have a detailed bill for Falstaff's supper at the Boar's Head with the price he had to pay for each item; but it would be unfair to take the proportions of wine to food as typical of the Elizabethans. Falstaff, we know, could imbibe an "intolerable deal of sack." Nevertheless, the tavern bill is interesting as showing what kind of food was favoured for the final meal of the day. The bill reads as follows:⁴

Item, A capon	2s. 2d.
Item, Sauce	4d.
Item, Sack, two gallons	5s. 8d.
Item, Anchovies and sack after supper	2s. 6d.
Item, Bread	ob. (halfpenny).

A particularly popular supper dish in summer-time was a salad. The list of herbs used shows a remarkable variety. Salads were made of fleur-de-luce, turnip-tops, succory,⁵ dandelion leaves, spinach, dock-leaves, sorrel, samphire, borage, bugloss, rosemary, and the leaves of musk roses. Cowslips, violets, primroses, longwort, liverwort, and purslane were also grown in gardens for salad uses.

¹ *2 Henry IV*, v. i. 27-30.

² *Ibid.*, v. iii. 15, 44.

³ *II. i.* 155-6. ⁴ *1 Henry IV*, II. iv. 583-90. ⁵ A wild lettuce.

After supper came the "banquet," or dessert, partaken of in an adjoining room. In summer-time the country gentleman, or anyone fortunate enough to possess a walled garden, would retire with his guests to the garden bower or arbour in the orchard. Shallow, after entertaining Falstaff and Silence to supper, exclaims, "Nay, you shall see my orchard, where, in an arbour, we will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of caraways, and so forth."¹ Men lingered over the "banquet," putting in the hours before bedtime.

The last thing of the day was the posset. A night-cap, we should call it. To posset means to curd, and the original posset was, no doubt, curdled milk. But possets became more elaborate than that. In the *Academy of Armourie*, published in 1688, Randle Holmes has this description: "Posset is hot milk poured on ale or sack, having sugar, grated biscuit, and eggs, with other ingredients boiled in it, which goes all to a curd." It was the possets of Duncan's grooms which Lady Macbeth drugged when planning the brutal assassination.² She prepares another posset for her husband. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mistress Quickly, ordering John Rugby to go to the casement and watch for Doctor Caius's coming, says, "Go; and we'll have a posset for 't soon at night, in faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire."³

Feasts and banquets brought out the full lavishness of Elizabethan hospitality. The skill and cunning of native and foreign cooks were fully tested and the resources of the kitchens taxed to the utmost. MacQuoid

¹ 2 *Henry IV*, v. iii. 1-4.

² *Macbeth*, II. ii. 6.

³ I. iv. 8-10.

writes:¹ "Unnecessarily large quantities of food of every description, often with eccentric flavourings to the sauces, such as musk, saffron, and ambergris (the last costing six shillings a pound) were a common feature." Wine flowed in rivers, and healths were drunk. Sovereigns of England, when entertaining a foreign prince or celebrating a marriage or other great occasion, dined in state in the great halls of their palaces, served on the knee by officers of their household proffering gold and silver dishes. Elizabeth disliked these public functions, but they were revived with new magnificence by James I. Such a banquet was that held by Macbeth when he had won the crown of Scotland, and that given by Cardinal Wolsey in honour of Henry VIII. The Duke of Milan and his family feast in public in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and Othello, as governor of Cyprus, is preceded to the table by heralds with trumpets.

Except for these feasts, the Tudor nobles preferred to dine quietly in the parlour instead of on the dais of the great hall with the long tables set out below for guests and retainers. But excuses for doing things on the grand scale were not allowed to pass. Nor was the opportunity for a feast less welcome to those classes who ordinarily fared much less sumptuously. Harrison records, "In feasting also, this latter sort (I mean the husbandmen), do exceed after their manner. . . . It is incredible to tell what meat is consumed and spent." Even the labourers and rural folk did not stint themselves. In *The Winter's Tale* the Clown is sent to purchase food supplies for the sheep-shearing festival. He recounts his commission to himself,² "Three pound of sugar;

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 136.

² iv. iii. 40-52.

five pound of currants; rice . . . I must have saffron to colour the warden¹ pies; mace; dates, none, that's out of my note; nutmegs, seven; a race² or two of ginger, but that I may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many raisins o' the sun" (sun-dried grapes). The currants would be the dried, imported kind. At fair-times an ox was often roasted whole in the street. One such fair was that at Manningtree in Essex, where the morality plays were acted. Prince Hal compares Falstaff to a "roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly."³ On these occasions the poor people made up for the somewhat meagre diet with which some of them had usually to be contented.

While the Elizabethans looked after the inner man, with, perhaps, an excess of generosity, they were punctilious in keeping their days of fasting. Fridays and Lent were strictly observed; and Wednesday was added by Elizabeth to the fast days, not for the good of her subjects' souls, but to help the depression in the fishing industry. "Fish for fasting-days"⁴ was the rule, and meat was forbidden. This did not mean that people went hungry. We read that on a fish day the Queen sat down to sturgeon or porpoise, pike, salmon, haddock, whiting, tench, conger, sea bream, carp, eels, lampreys, and perch, with tart, cream, and eggs. Butter and eggs figured on many bills of fare for fast days; but "a man who would eat mutton on Fridays"⁵ is a phrase used by Shakespeare to denote a person utterly without scruples.

Judged by our standards, Elizabethan table manners

¹ A baking pear.

³ *1 Henry IV*, II. iv. 498.

⁵ *Measure for Measure*, III. ii. 192.

² Root.

⁴ *Pericles*, II. i. 86.

showed a deplorable lack of refinement. This was not wholly due to the grossness which a superabundance of food always begets, nor to the habit of lingering over meals with the almost inevitable consequence of over-eating. The paucity of table implements was more largely to blame. Forks had been introduced only recently from Italy and were far from being in general use. They were still regarded as a novelty, and gentlemen would carry their own specimens about with them in ornamental cases. These forks were long, with two prongs, made of steel or silver, and handles of beautiful design. Table implements were not usually provided; and everyone carried his eating-knife with him as he carried his watch or his keys.

The absence of forks meant that people had to make generous use of their fingers in handling their food. For this reason, before a meal and after each course, servants brought in a silver basin and ewer, which were presented in turn to each guest, who dipped his or her hands in the water and wiped them on a linen napkin. Bones, after being gnawed, were thrown with other scraps under the table, where the dogs were already waiting for their share of the meal. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Launce laments that, taking his dog, Crab, at his master's command as a present to Silvia, "I came no sooner into the dining-chamber, but he steps me to her trencher, and steals her capon's leg. . . . He thrusts me himself into the company of three or four gentleman-like dogs, under the duke's table."¹ There Crab behaves in anything but a gentlemanly manner, and would have been whipped by the canine chucker-out, if Launce had

¹ IV. IV. 8-10, 18-20.

not taken the blame upon himself and received the whipping instead.

Elizabethan meals invariably began with a grace. This rite was never omitted, and Shakespeare makes several allusions to it. Petruchio asks Katharine if she will say the grace before their repast or leave it to him;¹ and Timon of Athens pronounces a most solemn and impressive grace before the banquet in which he exposes the ingratitude of his friends.² In all homes a reverent attitude while grace was being said was expected of every member. The wild Gratiano promises Bassanio that if he will take him as his companion to Belmont he will behave himself most circumspectly, even undertaking "while grace is saying," to "hood mine eyes thus with my hat, sigh, and say 'amen.'"³ Falstaff seems to think that the length of a grace should depend on the size of the meal that is to follow, for he tells the rakish Prince Hal that he has not so much grace "as will serve to be prologue to an egg and butter."⁴

Grace said, the serving-men then carried the dishes from the dresser in the buttery and placed them on the tables already covered with the carpets, which served the purpose of our modern tablecloths. All the dishes belonging to the meat course were placed on the table together, and the master or his steward did the carving. From a remark dropped by the Princess in *Love's Labour's Lost*, we gather that it is her gentleman-usher, Boyet, who carves at meal-times.⁵ The waiting at table was performed, or superintended, by the lord's and lady's

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 162.

² *Timon of Athens*, III. vi. 79-85.

³ *Merchant of Venice*, II. ii. 202-3.

⁴ *Henry IV*, I. ii. 18-23.

⁵ IV. i. 55.

personal attendants, and the higher the rank of the master the higher the rank of the attendant. We have seen that King Polixenes of Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale* has as his cupbearer Camillo, himself a lord.¹ When Shallow is entertaining Falstaff at his house in Gloucestershire, they are waited upon by Davy, Shallow's servant, Bardolph, and Falstaff's page.²

One dazzling feature of the Elizabethan table was the magnificence of the plate. Elegant gold and silver dishes, of exquisite design, were found in the royal palaces, set out on the court-cupboards. Macquoid says that "in the three technical points of engraving, chasing, and hammering, England could at that period hold its own with the rest of Europe."³ Noblemen possessed plate often worth one or two thousand pounds (about £10,000 in modern values); and gentlemen and rich merchants would not sell their plate for five hundred pounds and even more. Nor did it stop there. Farmers and artisans, in Harrison's words, "learned also to garnish their cupboards with plate, and their tables with carpets and fine naperie." Even among comparatively poor families small articles such as silver spoons and drinking-cups are listed in the inventories. In his book on his travels in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Paul Hentzner says of the goldsmiths' streets in London that all sorts of gold and silver vessels were exposed for sale and in such quantities that they surprised the visitor who saw them for the first time. Colleges and City Companies and many public institutions also had their treasures of rich plate and drinking-vessels often of sterling silver.⁴

¹ 1. ii. 313.

³ *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 131.

² 2 *Henry IV*, v. iii.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Besides the sumptuous plate, there was "a clinking of pewter" in private houses. Pewter was in common use also in the taverns. The poor had largely to content themselves with wooden platters and trenchers; and even in the best houses these humble articles would be used to supplement the gilt and silver plate.

Some of the drinking-bowls and cups were exquisite pieces of workmanship. They might be "figured goblets" like those of Richard II,¹ or solid silver cups like those of Timon.² Large standing-cups were placed on the tables at banquets, chiefly for decoration, and these were frequently all of gold. Smaller cups and bowls would be supplied for the actual drinking. Less pretentious vessels were made of wood, pewter, and horn, and were found in the meaner homes. Stoneware jugs, mounted with silver, were also in common use. They were mostly imported from Germany.

A very important article on the Tudor table was the salt-cellar, not only because it was, as often as not, a highly decorative piece, but also because it marked the division between people of differing rank who were sitting at the same table. The superior ranks sat above the salt: the inferior below it. In the farmhouse, where all were gathered at one great table, the salt divided the farmer and his family from their "hinds" or labourers. Shakespeare designates the humbler orders of society by the term "lower messes," that is, below the salt.

On the brilliant banqueting tables the great salts, with their covers, often stood more than a foot high. In such cases there were, of course, smaller salts as well. Sometimes these cellars were made of gold, sometimes

¹ *Richard II*, III. iii. 150.

² *Timon of Athens*, III. ii. 78.

elaborately ornamented with figures and quaint designs. In a roll of New Year's gifts to Queen Mary is a "salt with cover of silver and gilt, having a stone therein much enameled, of the story of Job"—a present to her from Cardinal Pole.

In spite of the valuable collections of plate, of which their owners were inordinately proud, and in spite of the good taste displayed by the Elizabethans in the choice of these treasures, articles of china and glass began to replace those of silver and gold. At first china was esteemed even more than good plate on account of its rarity; and although a considerable quantity of china and porcelain was brought into the country in later years as part of the cargoes of captured Spanish galleons, it was still highly prized. Pompey, the clown in *Measure for Measure*, remarks of a dish in Mistress Overdone's establishment, "Your honours have seen such dishes; they are not china dishes, but very good dishes."¹ Such rare treasures as china dishes would scarcely be found in Mistress Overdone's naughty house.

The silver drinking-cups gave way to fine goblets of Venetian glass, and the use of glass spread widely and rapidly. Glasses began to be manufactured in Crutched Friars, London, by Italians at the beginning of the reign.² As time went on they became much cheaper, and even poor people used glasses of a sort. Harrison records: "The poorest will have glass, if they may; but sith the Venetian is somewhat too dear for them, they content themselves with such as be made at home of fern and burnt stone." Here we may recall the scene from *Henry IV*, Part II, where Falstaff is trying hard to

¹ II. i. 96.

² Stow's *Chronicle*.

persuade Hostess Quickly, to whom he is already deeply indebted, to make him yet another loan. "By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn my plate," she tells him. But Falstaff replies, "Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking."¹

In all matters to do with the table—food, cooking, utensils, and service—the reign of Elizabeth was a period of change and progress, as it was, indeed, in almost every phase of home and public life.

¹ II. 1. 152-6.

CHAPTER VI

HOME DUTIES

HOME ties were far stronger in the time of Shakespeare than they are in our own generation, with whom those bonds have grown perceptibly looser than ever before in our domestic history. They were even stronger than the home ties of the Victorian age, which we are prone to regard as severely restrictive. The social structure and state of travel and communications made home duties of paramount importance. For many people, indeed, the only peremptory duties external to the home life were the demands of religion with its compulsory attendance at church.

The reasons for the position of the home as the centre of all life and activity were, first, the difficulty of travel, and second, the dual character of the home as residence and business premises. The village community was necessarily self-supporting. The large towns only were connected by reasonably good roads; and off the beaten track the lanes and alleys made transport in the modern sense an impossibility. The villagers, therefore, made their land supply them with the food, clothing, and other things they needed; and many of them never in their lives strayed many miles from the sight of their own homestead.

The home, moreover, was not merely a place to take some of one's meals in, to sleep in, or pass the leisure hours in amusement and recreation. For most of the Elizabethans it was the place where all one's working

hours were spent. For the merchant his home was also his office; for the trader it was also his store; for the artisan it was also his workshop. Even for the out-of-door labourer it was all the business premises that he knew. Home duties, then, is a term comprising much more when applied to life in Elizabethan England than to our modern conditions, when to travel from where one lives to where one works usually involves a considerable journey.

Naturally, the character of the home duties to be performed differed widely according to the rank and status of the head of the household. The prince or nobleman in his magnificent mansion, the country justice in his solid manor, the merchant in his comfortable town-house, and the husbandman in his simple cottage, had multifarious calls upon them, but resembled one another in meeting them, or the most important of them, under their own roofs.

At a time when lighting systems were extremely primitive and even the humble candle was expensive, at a time too when heating a house in which draughts were not very rigorously excluded was confined to wood fires with small additions of the dear sea-coal, as little of the work of a household as possible was done at night. Hours of daylight had much more influence over the domestic time-table than in these days of electrically lighted and centrally heated abodes. As a nation the Elizabethans were early to rise and early to bed. The hardy country-folk were about at four in the morning in summer and not later than five in the winter. They retired at nine o'clock in the dark winter evenings and ten o'clock in summer. Even the gentlefolk con-

sidered 6.30 a reasonable time for breakfast; seven o'clock was the hour of the sluggard. They also went to bed at an hour we should call early. Few sat up as late as midnight. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus cuts the revelry of the wedding night short with

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatched.¹

When the elderly Sir John Bracy calls at the Boar's Head Tavern for Sir John Falstaff, the fat knight asks, "What doth gravity out of his bed at midnight?"²

For the nobility, home duties had grown much less arduous than in those days when their castles were centres of military power and the possession of land carried with it the obligation to supply soldiers for the King's army. Now their estates brought them increased riches with a diminution of the old liabilities. They could, of course, be summoned to court and entrusted with important commissions in the Queen's business, but most of them were concerned chiefly with adding to their own wealth and luxury. Much of the routine work in the management of the estates was handed over to bailiffs or surveyors. In *Henry VIII*,³ the Duke of Buckingham is disgraced through information spitefully laid against him by his surveyor, Charles Knyvet, who had been dismissed from his office following complaints of the tenants. The business of the internal

¹ v. i. 370-3.

² *Henry IV.* ii. iv. 325.

³ i. ii. 172-3.

management of a great mansion was often delegated to the steward, of whom Malvolio,¹ Flavius,² and Oswald³ are Shakespearean examples.

Relieved of irksome tasks in running their households, the nobles and wealthy country-gentlemen devoted much of their day to pleasure and entertainment. After a light breakfast the morning might be occupied with hunting and hawking. Informal invitations to dinner at each other's houses, or, if in town, resort to some tavern haunt, marked the noonday hour. When these occasions were of some importance, well-to-do people would sit and chat over their meal until two or three in the afternoon; and in some cases, Harrison assures us,⁴ it was an effort for them to rise from the table to go to evening prayer and return from it in time for supper. In *As You Like It*, Orlando tells Rosalind that he must leave her to attend the exiled Duke at dinner, a function that he estimates will take up two hours of his time.⁵

On a summer's afternoon the young people would enjoy some outdoor sport, archery, bowls, or the like; and their elders might either look on or retire to the arbour in their orchard for a smoke, a chat, and a quiet nap. The evenings would be occupied with supper, or, on special occasions, a splendid banquet in the great hall; and the hours remaining before bedtime would be passed in music, dancing, or, on gala nights, masques, interludes, and entertainments of an ambitious kind. More on this point will be said in the following chapter on home entertainments.

¹ *Twelfth Night*.

² *King Lear*.

³ IV. i. 180.

⁴ *Timon of Athens*.

⁵ *Description of England*.

It is not so very long ago since prosperous citizens of London lived on their business premises, resorting to the exchanges for contact with their fellows. This was the invariable rule in the Elizabethan days. Antipholus of Ephesus, in *The Comedy of Errors*, is a typical business man of Shakespeare's own lifetime. He conducts his business from his own residence, and walks abroad in the mart and streets of the commercial quarter in order to consult with those important to his affairs. Shylock is another case in point. He frequents the Rialto to bring off his financial deals, but what we may term the office work in connection with them is performed at his private house.

An important room in the home was the counting-house. In those days before banks people kept their money in their chambers in locked coffer. It will be remembered that Falstaff's attempted intrigue with Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is more mercenary than anything else, and that the old rascal expresses the hope that he will use the lady as a key to the rich Ford's coffer.¹

Elizabethan coinage was a somewhat complicated matter. All the coins we use to-day, with the exception of the florin, were in circulation, as well as a good many more that we do not use, and a number of foreign coins which passed freely from hand to hand. To add to the confusion there were "two distinct standards of gold coined. Fine gold of the old English standard, 23 carats $3\frac{1}{2}$ grains, was used for the older coins—the noble, the ryal or rose noble, the angel, the angelet, and for sovereigns weighing twice as much as our own; whilst the

¹ II. ii. 285.

22 carat gold which we now use was coined into sovereigns half as heavy again as ours, into half-sovereigns, crowns, and half-crowns.”¹ The noble, last coined under Henry VIII, was 6s. 8d. in value; the ryal or rose noble of Elizabeth was worth 15s. The angel, angelet or half-angel, and quarter-angel were 10s., 5s., and 2s. 6d. pieces respectively. To increase the confusion both gold and silver were legal tender, and the use of the double standard with the constant fluctuations of the prices of both metals made it necessary to declare from time to time the value of the gold coins in terms of silver.

All, or nearly all, the coins above the value of two shillings were minted from gold. The coins of one shilling and less were of silver. Not till the close of the century were the crowns and half-crowns also made of silver. The small silver coins were remarkably numerous. In addition to the shilling, sixpence, and threepenny-bit, which we know so well, there were the groat or fourpenny piece, and other coins representing twopence, three-halfpence, a penny, three farthings, and a halfpenny. With the usual grumbles about the smallness of the threepenny-bit in mind, we shall probably be glad that nowadays we do not have to handle coins which were even smaller. The Elizabethans, however, minted their small silver money more thinly than we do and were able in consequence to increase the size of the diameter. At the same time there was considerable difficulty in distinguishing readily between silver coins which were only a halfpenny or a farthing different in value, “and a rose was accordingly placed behind the Queen’s head on the sixpence, threepence, threehalfpence, and three

¹ *Shakespeare’s England, Coinage* (George Unwin), i. 340.

farthings to distinguish them from the groat, the two-penny piece, the penny, and the halfpenny."¹ ²

At a time when money would buy about eight times as much in goods as it will to-day, even the silver halfpenny was quite a useful coin and more than was needed for humbler purchases. A need was felt for denominations of smaller value, but it was not found feasible to press copper into general service. The shopkeepers therefore issued tokens of brass, tin, or lead, which they gave as change for the silver coins and accepted in payment for goods as their customers required. Later, certain cities were given the privilege of issuing copper farthings on their own account.

The foreign gold coins in circulation included French crowns, Spanish ducats, Dutch florins, Portuguese crusadoes, and others. The French crown, mentioned frequently by Shakespeare and other contemporary writers, and apparently very familiar to English people generally, was worth about 6s. The ducat, which Antonio borrowed from Shylock in such unfortunate numbers, was valued at 6s. 8d., and the double ducat at 13s. 4d. The Portuguese crusado, so called from the cross in its design, alluded to in *Othello*,³ was worth 7s. 6d. Foreign coins of smaller value were also exchanged. One example is the denier, a French coin worth no more than one-twelfth of a sou, and cited by the ragged Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁴

On the whole, Shakespeare has very little to say about the higher values of gold coin. An exception is the angel,

¹ George Unwin in *Shakespeare's England*, i. 343.

² See *King John*, I. i. 143.

³ III. iv. 26.

⁴ Ind., i. 9.

the name of which is explained for us by the poet through the mouth of the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*.¹

They have in England
A coin that bears the figure of an angel
Stamped in gold.

To one who, following the literary fashion of the time, relied on punning for much of his humour, the word "angel" offered irresistible opportunities. Shakespeare's cleverest use of the pun is the remark of the scripture-quoting Falstaff, when he says of the rich Ford, "he hath a legion of angels."²

As observed by George Unwin,³ Shakespeare, apart from his computations of annual incomes in pounds, calculates most of his large sums of money in crowns. Orlando's inheritance,⁴ Adam's savings,⁵ Katharine's dowry,⁶ and Petruchio's wealth,⁷ are a few of the instances. But he also mentions the gold mark, the old English coin, worth about 13s. 4d. The largest sum involved is "the full thirty thousand marks of English coin,"⁸ which King John promises to the Dauphin as part of the dowry of his niece, Blanch of Spain.

Although coin was securely locked away in the strong coffers which were found in every house of any substance, money did not play that vital part in home life that it does to-day. Where the people were so largely self-

¹ II. vii. 55-7.

³ *Shakespeare's England*, i. 342.

⁴ *As You Like It*, I. i. 3.

⁶ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 123.

⁸ *King John*, II. i. 530.

² *Merry Wives*, I. iii. 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II. iii. 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I. ii. 57.

supporting, they were independent of outside traders, and the need for cash was not often urgent.

Even where purchases of extraneous goods were made—and the number of foreign importations had increased rapidly in certain quarters—a system of barter rather than financial transactions satisfied the creditors. We find that it was usual even to pay rent in kind; and in some districts people could exist comfortably without feeling the need of money at all.

Shopkeepers all lived on their premises. The typical shop of the sixteenth century consisted of a single room on the level of the street. There was a large, unglazed window opening directly on to the public thoroughfare, and its wooden shutter let down to form the counter. Many shopkeepers built penthouses against their walls. This was an erection with a roof sloping from about the height of the first story, under which was space enough to display their goods to advantage. Many of these goods were made in the shops themselves or in workrooms at the back. At night-time the shopkeepers hung lanterns outside their establishments, which provided the only illumination of the streets in those days. Where the light was not provided, it was necessary to carry a lantern about if one desired to find one's way and escape the attention of the cutpurse and footpad.

Factories were things of the future, and the craftsman plied his trade in his humble home. The skilled workmen of England were enjoying an increasing reputation, and there was a brisk demand both at home and abroad for their products. The worker was not an employee in the sense of one of an army of workers

engaged by a single capitalist, but more of an independent trader on his own account, selling his wares for the best prices they would fetch at fairs and markets or to travelling buyers and passers-by.

The "handicraft" man would occupy a small, two-roomed dwelling, in which the living-room was largely taken up by the work-bench. There would be an open fireplace with a wide, brick chimney, perhaps a recent addition; and a rough table and wooden stools would furnish the interior. The window would be devoid of glass, and when the shutter was down would leave the busy worker in full view of those passing down the street. In such a home the first duty would be the manufacture of those articles on which the livelihood of the inmates depended; and while the hours were long and the labour heavy, there was a certain freedom, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency, which have been entirely lost by the workers under our modern industrial system. At the same time, the solitary, independent worker was finding it increasingly perilous to stand alone and was combining with others of his trade to form those companies which were to change the complexion of industrial and commercial England.

The rural workers saw little of the inside of their houses during the hours of daylight. Long stretches in the fields, pastures, and woods were necessary to provide those quantities of food, clothing, and fuel which made the village independent and self-supporting for the necessities of life. After a weary summer's day the agricultural workers returned to their homes only to eat and sleep. The long winter evenings, however, gave opportunity for many useful occupations of another kind. The tools

needed for the work on the farms, as well as the utensils used for domestic purposes, were made between the hour of the winter sunset and bedtime. R. E. Prothero writing on Agriculture and Gardening in *Shakespeare's England*,¹ says; "Farmers, their sons, and their servants carved the wooden spoons, the platters, and the beechen bowls, though Harrison notices the increased use of pewter among the farming aristocracy. They fitted and riveted the bottoms to the horn mugs, or closed, in coarse fashion, the leaks in the leathern jugs. They plaited the osiers and reeds into baskets and into 'weeles' for catching fish; they fixed handles to the scythes, rakes, and other tools; cut the flails from holly or thorn, and fastened them with thongs to the staves; shaped the teeth for rakes and harrows from ash or willow, and hardened them in the fire; cut out the wooden shovels for casting the corn in the granary; fashioned ox yokes and bows, forks, racks, and rack-staves; twisted willows into scythe-cradles, or into traces and other harness gear." The carpenter, smith, and tinker came to the farmer-customer, instead of the customer coming to them, to perform that part of the home work which needed their skilful handling.

As to-day, most of the home duties, apart from those connected with the trade or profession of the master, were performed by the women. Cooking, spinning, sewing, cleaning, brewing, dyeing, and concocting herbal medicines were some of the occupations that kept wives and daughters busy. Naturally, their work varied according to their station in life. Ladies in the great households were very differently employed from the

¹ I. 358.

womenfolk of the farm labourers. But even in the mansions, where a male cook would superintend a large kitchen staff, and a qualified physician would be in attendance, the women did not neglect those branches of knowledge which were considered their special province. Even at the Queen's court the older women, according to Harrison, were skilful in surgery and the distillation of waters,¹ and every lady, he says, could cook choice dishes, mainly after Portuguese recipes. In another passage in his *Description of England*, Harrison describes more fully the manner in which the ladies of the court passed their time. "Our ancient ladies of the court do shun and avoid idleness," he writes; "some of them exercising their fingers with the needle, others in caul-work, divers in spinning of silk, some in continual reading either of the holy scriptures, or histories of our own or foreign nations about us, (and divers in writing volumes of their own, or translating of other men's into our English and Latin tongue), while the youngest sort in the meantime apply their lutes, citherns, prick-song, and all kinds of music, which they use only for recreation sake, when they have leisure, and are free from attendance upon the queen's majesty, or such as they belong unto."

The daughters of gentlemen, freed from ordinary routine duties by the enormous staffs which their fathers kept, were able to devote much of their time to educating themselves and improving their talents. It is possible that the women of the nobility in Elizabeth's day were as a class more accomplished than their peers have been at any time before or since. Shakespeare has representatives

¹ See *Cymbeline*, I. v.

of the rich gentlewomen class in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Katharine and Bianca, the daughters of the wealthy Baptista, study under tutors specially engaged for their instruction. They take up music, philosophy, and mathematics, and can read books in Greek and Latin, Speaking of Bianca, Baptista proudly observes:¹

And for I know she taketh most delight
In music, instruments and poetry,
Schoolmasters will I keep within my house,
Fit to instruct her youth.

Bianca meekly obeys her father's command to think no more of suitors until her elder sister is married, remarking²

Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe:
My books and instruments shall be my company,
On them to look and practise by myself.

This passage reveals the attitude of daughters, even grown-up daughters, to their parents in those spacious days. It was so respectful, meek, and obedient that modern grown-up daughters, who regard their homes in a very different light, might argue that "spacious" was scarcely the adjective to apply to a time of such close conventions and restrictions.

The distaff was familiar in every household. Hermione, adding her persuasions to those of Leontes to press Polixenes to prolong his stay at the court of Sicilia, remarks humorously, "And he shall not stay, we'll thwack him hence with distaffs."³ Country-gentlewomen, citizens' and farmers' wives spent much time

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, I. i. 92-5.

² *Ibid.*, I. i. 81-3.

³ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 37.

at the spinning-wheel. They spun wool into coarse cloth and hemp into linen. "Hempen home-spuns"¹ is Shakespeare's name for men of the mechanical class clothed in the home-made garments which seemed poor stuff compared with the manufactured cloth then being imported from the Continent. But country districts relied upon the home-made material which the women spun, wove, dyed, cut, and made into serviceable clothing.

Elizabethan women of all classes were experts with their needles. Their beautiful embroideries and fine designs compared favourably with those of any other nation and have rarely been surpassed in our own. Not only in the making of clothes was their skill employed, but carpets, cushions, curtains, quilts, and other household wares have come down to us as testimonials to their ability and industry.

Shakespeare in many of his scenes of home life shows the womenfolk busy with their needles. In the Queen's apartments in London, Katharine of Arragon and her women are at work on embroidery.² Katharine delighted "in working with the needle curiously," and was to be found by those who craved audience "busy at work with her maids," and "with a skein of red silk about her neck." Her favourite occupation seems to have been cut work, now known as appliqué, her patterns probably being supplied to her from Spain. She was mostly employed in decorating copes, many of them of cloth of gold and silver, or embroidered velvet.³

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. i. 79.

² *Henry VIII*, III. i. S.D.

³ See *History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (Peter Heylyn, 1661).

Of other Shakespearean female characters, Bianca, whose scholarly and artistic accomplishments we have already noted, was also a skilled needlewoman.¹ In a room in Coriolanus's house in Rome we discover his mother, Volumnia, and his wife, Virgilia, seated on two low stools busily sewing.² When the visiting Valeria enters, she remarks: "How do you both? You are manifest housekeepers" (that is, stayers at home). "What are you sewing here? A fine spot, in good faith." In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena, in an appeal to her rival, Hermia, recalls their happy times together, and says:³

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate.

In *Twelfth Night* we seem to have a reference to the rural industry of lace-making. Duke Orsino, alluding to a song of Feste's, says:⁴

. . . it is old and plain;
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones
Do use to chant it.

Other work performed by women in the home included, according to Prothero,⁵ plaiting straw or reeds for neck collars, stitching and stuffing sheepskin bags

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, II. i. 25.

² *Coriolanus*, I. iii. S.D. 54-6.

³ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. ii. 203-8.

⁴ II. iv. 43-7.

⁵ *Shakespeare's England*, I. 358.



MARKETING—WASHING

(From a woodcut in the Series of Satirical Prints entitled "Tittle-Tattle, or the several branches of Gossiping")

for cart-saddles, peeling rushes for wicks and dipping them to make the tapers or thin household candles, and making their thread from nettles. Further duties comprised brewing the home-made ale, malting the barley, and kneading and baking the bread. The farmer's wife usually superintended the dairy and often had several milkmaids to assist her. From a remark of Touchstone, who recalls how he once loved a milkmaid and would kiss her batler,¹ it seems that these girls had also the laundry work to do. A batler was a wooden club used for beating clothes during the process of washing.²

We know from Falstaff's experience in the buck-basket, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, that washing-day was an important occasion in every self-respecting household.

"The meanest chares,"³ as Shakespeare describes the drudgery of housework, was done by maids and kitchen wenches and drab scullions, who were hired for a few shillings a year and performed their duties without complaint or the pricks of class-consciousness.

One of the most important duties of home life, a duty to be shared by both parents alike, is the rearing of children. In studying the Elizabethans' attitude towards this question we are struck by their insistence on the necessity for the strictest discipline. Implicit obedience to a father's word was expected, and no deviation from a literal interpretation of the fifth Commandment was tolerated. Parents had no confidence in the efficacy of

¹ *As You Like It*, II. iv. 49.

² See *New English Dictionary*.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV. xv. 75.

moral suasion. The birch, hard and often, was the method they preferred. Shakespeare expounds this conviction for us in *Measure for Measure*.¹

Now, as fond fathers,
Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
Only to stick it in their children's sight
For terror, not for use, in time the rod
Becomes more mock'd than fear'd . . .

In spite of the severity with which children were brought up, complaining voices were raised that the young things were being spoilt by indulgent parents—an observation that has a peculiarly modern ring. John Northbrooke, who wrote about 1577 and was something of a kill-joy, remarks scathingly, "Who seeth not how fondly fathers and mothers bring up their children in cockering and pampering them? From their infancy they be given to none other thing but pride, delicious fare, and vain idle pleasures and pastimes."² "Fond," as used in the above extracts, is the equivalent of foolish.

In Shakespearean drama a father's word is law, and obedience, particularly on the part of grown-up sons and daughters, is expected as a matter of course. In the case of children of tender years, a few of whom appear amongst his characters, the happiest and most affectionate relations appear to exist between them and their parents. Possibly we see here the reflection of the poet's own love for his daughters and for the little son he lost. Certainly, in one or two cases Shakespearean children seem to be the spoilt darlings of the household. In *Titus*

¹ 1. iii. 23-7.

² *Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes*.

Andronicus, Lucius says to his young son, also called Lucius, a "loving child," and grandson of old Titus:

thy grandsire loved thee well;
 Many a time he danced thee on his knee,
 Sung thee asleep, his loving breast thy pillow;
 Many a matter hath he told to thee,
 Meet and agreeing with thine infancy.¹

Another precocious child of doting parents is the young son of Leontes and Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, little Mamillius. He is full of childish prattle and impudent retorts to his indulgent elders. He pesters his mother to such a degree that she exclaims impatiently to her ladies, "Take the boy to you: he so troubles me: 'Tis past enduring."² But Hermione does not correct the child. There is a happy scene between father and small son; and Polixenes, looking on with a smile, is asked by Leontes, "Are you so fond of your young prince, as we do seem of ours?"³ Polixenes answers with enthusiasm:⁴

If at home, sir,
 He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter:
 Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;
 My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all;
 He makes a July's day short as December;
 And with his varying childness cures in me
 Thoughts that would thicken my blood.

Leontes replies:

So stands this squire
 Officed with me.

¹ v. iii. 161-5.

³ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 164.

² II. i. 1-2.

⁴ I. ii. 165-72.

This tender speech is in strong contrast to the uncompromising harshness of Polixenes towards the grown Florizel, when the young man desires to wed the shepherd's daughter, Perdita.

Affectionate and lenient as Shakespeare's parents may be to tiny boys and girls, when the important question of the marriage of their children is raised, they exert absolute authority. This was true of his age. Again and again Shakespeare uses the parental claim to settle all details affecting the wedded life of their offspring. In the plays we hear the angry scolding of Juliet by Capulet when she refuses to become the bride of Paris. We have the attempts of Hermia's father to force her into a hated match with Demetrius, and the stern treatment meted out by Cymbeline to his daughter, Imogen, for her secret marriage to Posthumous. In this case the outraged father condemns his daughter's lack of filial duty and his own leniency:

She hath not appear'd
Before the Roman (guest), nor to us hath tender'd
The duty of the day: she looks us like
A thing more made of malice than of duty:
We have noted it. Call her before us, for
We have been too slight in sufferance.¹

The education of children seriously concerned only parents of the upper and middle classes. The scions of noble houses were prepared by tutors for their term at the university, which was entered in the middle teens. A period of foreign travel was considered essential to complete a gentleman's education. Boys from middle-

¹ *Cymbeline*, III. v. 30-5.

class homes attended the various grammar schools. Before they could be admitted, they were required to be able to read and to have reached the age of seven years. Girls were tutored in their homes by specially selected masters. The discipline at school was as rigid as that of the home. Falstaff, after his thrashing by Ford, confesses, "Since I plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, I knew not what 'twas to be beaten till lately."¹ And we have the second of the seven ages of man described by Jacques:²

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.

Of minor home occupations, deserving of mention, that of letter-writing assumed an importance which it has now lost. When journeys were long and difficult, and the transit of a letter required the hiring and payment of a special courier, people wrote at length and with a care and seriousness which put our modern flippant and cursory correspondence to shame. Much of our knowledge of the times has been culled from the long descriptive letters the Elizabethans, both men and women, were fond of writing to each other. Shakespeare's characters are constantly dispatching and receiving epistles. Even Phoebe, the pretty shepherdess of *As You Like It*, addresses a letter to Rosalind in her boyish guise of Ganymede.³ This was rather stretching a point in the interests of drama, for few of the shepherdesses of Phoebe's time could read and write.

¹ *Merry Wives*, v. i. 26-8.

² *As You Like It*, II. vii. 145-7.

³ IV. iii.

Ink was often made at home. Percy Macquoid¹ gives the following house recipe for making it, the date being 1599: 2 oz. of gum, 2 oz. of copperas, and 4 oz. of galls, costing 8d. This recipe explains for us the remark of Sir Toby Belch, when urging Sir Andrew Aguecheek to write a challenge to "Cesario": "Let there be gall enough in thy ink, though thou write with a goose-pen, no matter."² Ink was carried in ink-horns, and letters were invariably sealed. According to Macquoid,³ in 1585 half a ream of paper and half a pound of sealing wax cost 2s.

Pets were kept in many homes. Apart from the dogs used for hunting and the hawks for falconry, other animals were prized merely for the amusement and companionship they afforded. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Launce is sent by his master, Proteus, to deliver the present of a lap-dog to the lady Silvia. Unfortunately, the little "squirrel," as Launce contemptuously calls it, is stolen from him in the market-place, and he offers his own lumbering, sour-natured mongrel, Crab, in its place—a disastrous offer, as it turns out.⁴ Monkeys were appreciated as pets in some quarters, and Jessica, we learn, traded a torquoise ring of her father's for one of the tribe.⁵ Parrots were brought back by the sailors, and their well-known ability to imitate the human voice lends point to Benedick's curt remark to Beatrice. "Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher."⁶ The cat did not hold the same place in the affections of home-loving people

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, II. 140.

² *Twelfth Night*, III. II. 52-3.

³ *Shakespeare's England*, II. 140.

⁵ *Merchant of Venice*, III. I. 123-4.

⁴ IV. IV. 59-63.

⁶ *Much Ado*, I. I. 139.

which it holds to-day. It was shunned as the familiar of witches.

The remaining interest within the home, and a very significant one, too, was the buying and making of clothes and costumes. Dress had assumed such importance in the lives of all classes of the community that this subject cannot be dismissed in a short paragraph, and has been given a chapter of its own.

Comparatively few people strayed far from the environs of their home, but for statesmen, courtiers, soldiers, players, pedlars, and certain others, the question of travel was an important one. Some of the human migrants were forced to make their journeys on foot. Others, more happily situated, went on horseback, a method by which many of Shakespeare's characters are presumed to arrive and depart. Women often rode pillion behind their men, but it seems that Katharine rode her own horse on the way to her new home with Petruchio.¹ The old and infirm were carried in horse-litters, a means adopted by the Earl of Gloucester for dispatching the mad King Lear towards Dover.²

In 1564 occurred an event which revolutionized land travel, at any rate as far as women were concerned. A Dutchman named William Boonen introduced coaches into England and obtained for himself the post of coachman to the Queen. Elizabeth henceforth went everywhere in her coach, and other great ladies were not slow to follow suit. Not only was a coach a cheaper method of transit than horses, but it enabled the mistress of the household to take with her her gentlewomen, maid, children, and such baggage as they needed. The

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 75.

² *Lear* III. vi. 97.

public coach was a slow development in England, although it made headway on the Continent; but wheeled vehicles began to replace the pack-horse, and so introduced a new mobility which was in time to change the self-contained character of the home life of the country.

CHAPTER VII

HOME ENTERTAINMENTS

IF there was one thing the Elizabethans knew thoroughly, it was how to enjoy themselves. They entered with such zest into their amusements and recreations, that "merry England" was no fiction, but a reality which roused the Puritan writers to furious jeremiads. John Northbrooke, a gentleman who set his face sternly against all empty pleasures, wrote in his book, *Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes*: "Verily we keep oily cheer one with another in banqueting, surfeiting, and drunkenness; also we use all night long in ranging from town to town, and from house to house, with mummeries and masks, dice-playing, carding, and dancing, having nothing less in our memories than the day of death." But as yet these pious persons were not heeded by a majority of the people who went their happy way undeterred by the threat of a terrible retribution to come.

The centre of all entertainments was the home. Even for such outdoor sports as hunting, the home park was the venue. In the towns, it is true, attendance at the newly established public theatres was growing, and many passed an unedifying hour at the bull- and bear-baiting pits. But in the case of the sovereign and the great nobles, it was the general rule for the actors to go to their patrons; and Elizabeth was held to have created an advanced precedent when she paid a personal visit to the Blackfriars theatre. Among the middle and lower classes also, all their amusements were centred on the

home, particularly in the country districts, where people had to rely on their own resources for such entertainment as was not provided by the strolling players, jugglers, tumblers, and clowns.

There never was an age in which hospitality was more lavish than the age in which Shakespeare lived. Enormous sums of money were spent in providing sumptuous banquets with an incredible number of dishes and the most novel, rare and expensive foods and wines for the delectation of the fortunate guests. Ingenuity was exercised in providing fresh spectacles in the way of masques and plays, and the most skilled musicians were engaged to accompany the feast with song and dulcet instrument.

Some idea of the bountiful manner in which gentlemen of wealth and standing kept open house is obtained from Barnabe Riche, a soldier and author, who wrote his *Farewell to Militarie Profession* in 1581. This book of stories contains a description of the life at Holdenby in Northamptonshire, the new-built seat of Sir Christopher Hatton. Riche says there were "such worthy port and daily hospitality kept, that although the owner himself useth not to come there once in two years, yet I dare undertake, there is daily provision to be found convenient, to entertain any nobleman with his whole train that should hap to call in of a sudden. And how many gentlemen and strangers, that come but to see the house, are there daily welcomed, feasted, and well lodged. From whence should he come, be he rich, be he poor, that should not there be entertained, if it please him to call in? To be short, Holdenby giveth daily relief to such as be in want, for the space of six or seven miles compass."

Fortunes were spent in entertaining sovereigns and their trains by favourites who were allowed to enjoy the honour. Those subjects of Elizabeth privileged to receive their queen nearly ruined themselves to provide for her large suites during protracted visits. Lord Burghley, her great minister, with whom she stayed on twelve occasions, sometimes for three weeks, a month, or even six weeks, expended two or three thousand pounds every time. If we multiply this figure by eight we begin to realize the inroads made upon a noble's fortune by the presence of a royal guest.

The well-known visit of Elizabeth to Kenilworth in 1575 has been recorded for us in detail by contemporary witnesses, and is a remarkable example of the scale on which entertainment was provided. Many believe that Shakespeare himself saw the festivities as a young boy and afterwards penned "the mermaid on a dolphin's back" lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*¹ from what he remembered of this splendid occasion. It will be instructive and amusing to give briefly in diary form the way Her Majesty spent her days while under the hospitable roof of the much-favoured Earl of Leicester:

- | | | |
|------|------------|---|
| Sat. | July 9th. | The Queen was welcomed at Kenilworth with speeches, laudatory poems, and fireworks. |
| Sun. | July 10th. | Attended service in the parish church in the morning.
Dancing in the afternoon.
Fireworks at night. |
| Mon. | July 11th. | Hunting.
On return to the castle, a complimentary dialogue between a Savage Man and Echo. |

¹ II. i. 148-54.

- Tues. July 12th. A day of rest: music and dancing.
 Wed. July 13th. Hunting.
 Thurs. July 14th. Bear-baiting in the morning.
 Fireworks and Italian tumblers in the evening.
 Fri. July 15th. A day of rest.
 Sat. July 16th. A day of rest.
 Sun. July 17th. Divine service in the morning.
 Rustic festivities: a bride-ale, with a morris-dance and tilting at the quintain, and the Hock-Tide show of the people of Coventry.
 Mon. July 18th. Hunting.
 A water-pageant of the Delivery of the Lady of the Lake, with Triton riding upon a mermaid and Arion upon a dolphin. (This was perhaps the show which Shakespeare saw.¹)
 An investiture of knights.
 The Queen "touched" for the king's evil.²
 Tues. July 19th. Repetition of the Coventry show.

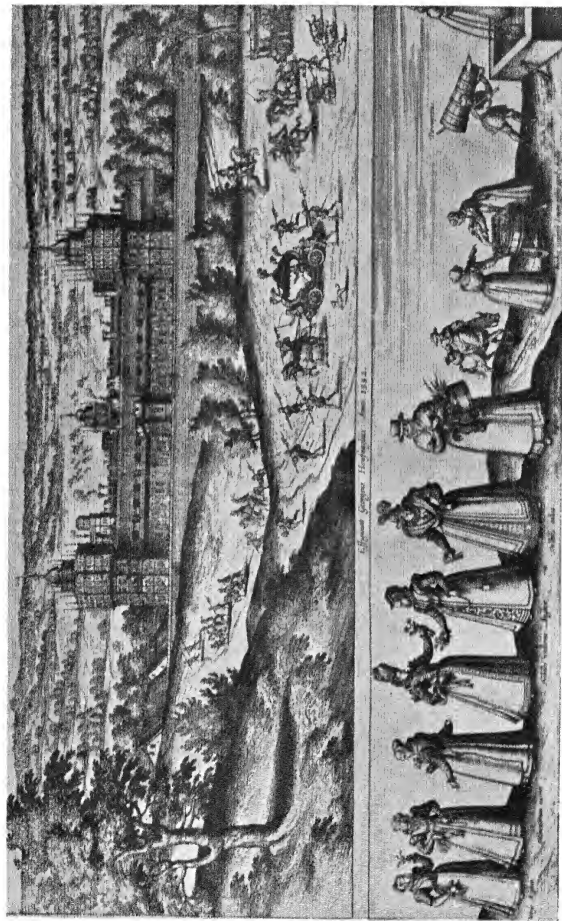
The Queen was to have left Kenilworth on the 20th, and Leicester had prepared a final show for her departure. But inclement weather postponed her intended remove to the Earl of Warwick, and she did not actually leave for another week. What entertainment Leicester provided for the prolonged stay we do not know, except that a show entitled *The Farewell of Silvanus* marked her eventual leave-taking.³

Elizabeth was accompanied by a numerous train of gentlemen in waiting, maids of honour, and servants

¹ Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 148-54.

² Described by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, IV. III. 140-59.

³ E. K. Chambers in *Shakespeare's England*, i. 102-3.



HUNTING SCENE

(From the *Hofsnigel* print of Nonsuch Palace)

of all kinds, and was followed by a long column of pack animals and baggage carts bearing her many trunks and possessions behind her. In some cases the accommodation of the castle or mansion was severely taxed; and Lord Burghley, for example, found it necessary to enlarge his beautiful home, Theobalds, more than once in order to house his sovereign and the swarm that waited upon her.

Shakespeare gives us in *Macbeth* a good impression of the manner in which a sovereign was welcomed to a loyal subject's seat. King Duncan's arrival at Macbeth's castle is greeted by hautboys and torches. His Majesty is received with due humility by the lady of the house.¹

Lady Macbeth:

All our service

In every point twice done, and then done double,
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,
We rest your hermits.²

The feast or banquet was naturally the central feature of the magnificent entertainment provided for guest and visitor, and in our chapter on meal-times we have had something to say on the fare provided and the disregard of cost in preparing for these functions. Sometimes even the great hall was found inadequate to accommodate the company, and rich men built new banqueting-houses in their gardens. At Gorhambury, the stately residence of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, where the Queen was sumptuously entertained in 1577, there was a banqueting-house in the

¹ *Macbeth*, I. vi. 14-20.

² People bound to pray for their benefactors.

orchard. In his interesting work *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*,¹ John Nichols tells us that this hall was "adorned with great curiosity, having the Liberal Arts beautifully depicted on its walls; over them the pictures of such learned men as had excelled in each; and under them verses expressive of the benefits derived from the study of them."

A letter written by the Archbishop of Canterbury to his brother prelate, Grindal of York, will help us to appreciate the intricate arrangements for, and huge expenses incurred by, one of these important banquets. The occasion is the visit of Elizabeth to Canterbury in 1573, when the Archbishop was called upon to entertain her with "certain of the Council and divers of the Court" to supper. He tells his friend that he "gave them fourteen or fifteen dishes, furnished with two mess at my long table, whereat sat about twenty. And in the same chamber a third mess, at a separate table, whereat sat ten or twelve; my less hall having three long tables well furnished, with my Officers, and with the Guard, and others of the Court." The Archbishop continues, "And upon one Monday it pleased her Highness to dine in my great hall, thoroughly furnished, with the Council, Frenchmen, Ladies, Gentlemen, and the Mayor of the Town, with his Brethren, etc., her Highness sitting in the midst, having two French Ambassadors at one end of the table, and four Ladies of Honour at the other end. And so three mess were served by her Nobility at waiting, her Gentlemen and Guard bringing her dishes, etc."²

¹ 1788.

² *The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* (Nichols).

Shakespeare, holding his mirror up to life and reflecting all its aspects in his work, introduces several of these prodigal feasts into his plays. When handling the great figure of Wolsey, it was natural that he and his collaborator, John Fletcher, should touch upon the great entertainments at York Place and Hampton Court, for the Cardinal's name was a byword for unrestrained luxury and extravagance. On one occasion at Hampton Court he entertained the French Ambassador to a marvellous banquet and provided sleeping accommodation for all his guests and their servants, hospitality that called for the supplying and preparing of 280 beds.

The banquet which Shakespeare and Fletcher introduce into the chronicle pageant of *Henry VIII* is that held on the memorable occasion when the King and some of his courtiers broke in upon Wolsey and his guests disguised as shepherds. This incident is historical and was recorded in the biography of Wolsey, written by his gentleman usher, George Cavendish, who happened to be present. The dramatists based their scene on this authority, but they departed from fact in making it the circumstance of Henry VIII's meeting with Anne Boleyn. The stage directions furnish a true enough picture of the great hall at York Place, with Wolsey sitting in solitary state at a small table, while his guests are accommodated at a long table. Gallants of the nobility and beautiful ladies are placed alternately and bidden to regale themselves. The King and his companions come in masked, but their lowly disguise is quickly penetrated. The tables are then turned up, and music and dancing interrupt the feasting. A new banquet is prepared in

the privy chamber—evidently Wolsey had wind of the joke the King was about to play—and the revellers proceed thither to resume their broken meal.¹

Many other feasts are inserted into the plots of Shakespearean drama. Hospitality was a trait much honoured by the Elizabethans. Capulet, Timon, Leonato, are examples of the perfect host. Any excuse for a banquet was accepted. In *Hamlet*, King Claudius makes the successful return of his embassy to Norway an opportunity for celebration.² The excesses of Cleopatra's court, however, could no longer be excused, and no further attempts to excuse them were made.

Beggars and destitute persons generally benefited by the scraps which fell from these loaded banqueting tables and which were not consumed by the hordes of retainers. The great nobles were expected to dispense a certain amount of charity. Those tired and hungry ones, who had formerly been relieved by the bounty of the monks, now looked to the class who had succeeded to the property of the monasteries to continue to relieve their need. Nor, in most cases, did they look in vain. The Elizabethans could be generous; and we can recall many occasions in Shakespeare's plays on which a grateful noble or gentlewoman gives a purse to some inferior who has pleased them or rendered a valuable service.

Feasting and merry-making were not confined to the nobility, nor, for that matter, to well-to-do gentry and prosperous citizens. The farmhouse saw its share of fun and frolic. On such occasions as the harvest home and the sheep-shearing, farmers entertained their labourers

¹ *Henry VIII*, I. iv.

² *Hamlet*, II. ii. 84.

with fare that was of the best. In *The Winter's Tale*, the rich shepherd provides his shearers, shepherds, and shepherdesses with plenty of good cheer and jollification. There are to be sugar, currants, rice, warden pies, prunes, raisins, and any amount of things to eat; there are to be flowers and nosegays; and there are to be songs, music, and dancing.¹

Music and dancing, indeed, were part of every celebration and festivity. Few educated Elizabethans were unable to play or sing, and everybody could dance. Dancing was the most popular of all pastimes, even more popular than it was with us during the craze which followed the Great War; and dancing-schools in London and elsewhere reaped a rich harvest. It was not restricted to week-days. Our diary of Queen Elizabeth's stay at Kenilworth shows that on Sunday, July 10th, there was dancing in the afternoon after attendance at divine service in the morning. In the years to come, Sunday dancing was to cease under the bitter attacks of the Puritans, but while Good Queen Bess lived the people surrendered little of their zest for enjoyment.

The part played by kissing undoubtedly added to the popularity of dancing. All the Tudor dances contained a kissing episode, which was allowed for in the music, and which had to be observed if one was to dance properly to time. Moreover, when a dance was over, it was expected that the gentleman should claim the kiss from his lady which was a partner's right. As King Henry says to Anne Boleyn, "Sweetheart, I were unmannerly to take you out, And not to kiss you."² In a dialogue between "Custom and Veritie" concerning the *Use*

¹ IV. iii-iv.

² *Henry VIII*, I. iv. 94-6.

and *Abuse of Dancing and Minstrelsy*, John Alde asks with engaging candour:

. . . What fool would dance,
If that when dance is done,
He may not have at lady's lips
That which in dance he won?

Dancing was of two kinds. There were the society balls held at Court or in the great mansions of the wealthy; and there were the folk dances, the only public dances of the day, performed on the village green or round a maypole or elsewhere at festival times. The society or Court dances, again, were of two kinds: the slow, gliding, dignified measures, "dances basses" as they were called; and the gay, skipping, frolicsome variety styled "dances baladines." Of the slow dances the oldest and best known was the Pavane; and, like so many of the society dances, it came from France. The Pavane was later brightened up by introducing into it a brisker step which was called the Galliard and sometimes the Cinque pace. The Coranto is another dance, mentioned by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, and in close connection with the Galliard. Sir Toby Belch, urging Sir Andrew Aguecheek to be less modest about his accomplishments, asks, "Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto?"¹ The Coranto was a kind of quick-step danced in two-four time, and its character is revealed in the lines spoken by Bourbon in *Henry V.*²

They bid us to the English dancing-schools
And teach lavoltas high and swift corantos;
Saying our grace is only in our heels,
And that we are most lofty runaways.

¹ I. iii. 136-7.

² III. v. 32-5.

The Lavolta was a dance in which energetic leaps were the chief characteristic. Another leaping dance, in which the feet were beaten together in the air, was the Capriole, from which our word "caper" is derived. Yet another lively dance, Spanish in flavour, was the Canary; the Brawl, on the other hand, was one of the quiet, dignified, "dances basses." It was the oldest type of figure dance and eventually developed into the minuet. Another restrained dance was the Allemande, having rather a laboured motion as befitting its German origin.

The ballrooms of the mighty witnessed antics more frivolous than the society dances mentioned. The Cushion Dance, for example, extended the kissing episode until every woman present had been kissed by every man. Another somewhat undignified dance was the Trenchmore, which resembled our Sir Roger de Coverley, and, coming after the last of the society dances, often degenerated into a romp. With these two dances we enter the realm of the people or folk dances, which were, however, not danced in the home so much as at fairs, festivals, and holiday gatherings out-of-doors. Public dancing, particularly Sunday dancing, roused the ire of the Puritan reformers, some of whom charitably described it as "a pestiferous vice" and "the science of heathen devilry"!

Quite the most celebrated of the people's dances in Elizabeth's days was the Morris, which needs no description, since we have our modern exponents who have made it familiar to most of us. Originally a Moorish dance, which reached England via Spain, it became early associated with a pageant dance in honour of Robin Hood, which determined its numbers and the characters

represented in it. People wore their gayest clothes for morris-dancing, the most essential part of their costume being the garter hung with bells, which was tied to the legs. Pipes and tabors supplied the music.

There were many other folk dances, sometimes performed at home, but more often in public. There were jig-morrises, hornpipes, simple round dances about a maypole, the Hay, a dance with winding evolutions in the manner of the grand chain in our recently defunct Lancers, and a slow and lugubrious measure appropriately known as the Dump. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates the appetite for enjoyment among Elizabeth's subjects so well as the zeal with which they engaged in dancing of all kinds, in all places, and at all times.

No home entertainment was complete without music. Although religious music had suffered some decline as a result of the Reformation, the enormous progress made in secular music justified the description of the English as a musical nation at the close of the sixteenth century. Music played a part in everybody's education, and musical taste was widely developed under encouraging influences. Perlin, the Frenchman, wrote: "The English one with the other are joyous, and are very fond of music; for there is not ever so small a church in which music is not sung."¹ Itinerant musicians scratched a living by wandering from place to place and meeting the musical needs of the people.

Every nobleman or gentleman of consequence maintained a number of musicians on his household staff. These men and women helped to amuse their employer and were much in evidence when important guests were

¹ *Description of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland.*

entertained. Part of their duty was to teach the children of their patron. Artists of all kinds were then dependent on the patronage of the wealthy. It was the only way in which a living could be made while devoting oneself to one's art. Poets, painters, and musicians found it essential to obtain the goodwill of some great man who had a refined taste and the means to indulge it. So it is we read that nearly all the noted English composers of the day were in the service of one or other of the aristocracy or wealthy country-gentlemen.

Englishmen at this period excelled in a special type of music which they had made particularly their own, namely, the composition and singing of glees and madrigals. Most of these songs were intended to be sung without accompaniment; and it was expected of every educated youth that he should be able to read a part at sight. A great number of songs and ballads were also written to be sung to a musical accompaniment, most generally the lute, but sometimes the viol. People who could not sing and accompany themselves were considered to have left a serious gap in their education.

The lute, the usual accompaniment of the soloist, was the most popular instrument of the day, and the one which most people learned to play. W. Barclay Squire tells us it had a "pear-shaped body pierced by a sound-hole, attached to which was a neck covered by a finger-board divided by frets of catgut or brass into measured lengths. It was played by the fingers, unaided by a plectrum, and music for it was written in a special notation called tablature, in which the horizontal lines represent the strings of the instrument, the semitones above the open sound of each string being represented

by small letters.”¹ Some lutes were beautifully made. In a roll of New Year’s gifts to Queen Mary was “a lute in a case, covered with black silk and gold”; and Queen Elizabeth, who was notably fond of music and a good performer, offered a hundred marks for a lute of mother-of-pearl, which was ultimately secured by Henry, Lord Berkeley, for his wife.² The lute required careful tending to keep it in good condition, and the tuning of it was a difficult matter. Yet even people in quite humble stations of life, like Brutus’s page and Katharine of Arragon’s waiting-woman, were accomplished performers. The cittern, mentioned in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,³ was a type of lute, which usually had a head grotesquely carved at the extremity of the neck and finger-board.⁴

The viol, the next most popular instrument, was the Elizabethan forerunner of the violin, and differed from it in having deeper ribs and a flat back. According to Barclay Squire, it was made in four principal sizes: the treble or discant, the tenor, the bass (or viol da gamba), and the double bass (or violone).⁵ The keyed instruments consisted of the single-manual organ and the small-toned virginal or spinet. The wind instruments included the recorder, a kind of flute or flageolet, the hautboy or oboe, the sackbut or trombone, the cornet, trumpet, and shepherd’s pipe. We also hear from Shakespeare of the bagpipe, then a favourite instrument in Lincolnshire;⁶ and the drums and tabors completed what was an instrumental list not remarkable for its length.

There was no equivalent of the modern orchestra in

¹ *Shakespeare’s England, Music*, II. 28–30.

² *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* (Nichols).

³ V. ii. 614.

⁵ *Shakespeare’s England*, II. 30.

⁴ *Temple Shakespeare*.

⁶ *Henry IV*, I. ii. 86.

Elizabethan times. Combining one kind of instrument with another was only in an early experimental stage. Nevertheless, it is referred to by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*,¹ and *As You Like It*² under its current term of "broken music." Viols, as we noticed above, were made in sets of four—treble, tenor, bass, and double bass, and these when played together formed a "consort." When the stage directions require "musicians" in Shakespearean drama, it is a consort that we must assume. The introduction of an instrument of a different class disturbed the consort and "broken" music was the result. The musicians who were invariably attached to the companies of players would not, however, have ventured upon a branch of music still in its infancy.

That Shakespeare was a lover of music no one who has the smallest acquaintance with his work can doubt. And his appreciation was backed, too, by a sound theoretical knowledge and an understanding of the executant side. All the great houses, into whose interiors he allows us to peep, have their resident musicians, maintained by the master; and the poet loses few opportunities to break his dialogue with a song or instrumental piece. In some plays he ventures further. He goes out of his way to provide musical opportunities; and the number of his characters who are vocally gifted are a much larger proportion of the whole than would be found among educated people of to-day. This, of course, is the result of the larger place then occupied by music in the educational system, and the importance of music to every kind of function and festivity. The charming song-lyrics with which Shakespeare's plays are sprinkled

¹ III. i. 52.

² I. ii. 149.

have inspired musicians of many nations and were sung in his own day to popular airs of the moment or to tunes specially composed for them. The dramatist even went to the length of introducing characters for no other reason than to sing the songs. Amiens of *As You Like It* is the chief of these, and Feste of *Twelfth Night* another talented performer. Music, both vocal and incidental, plays such an important part in *The Tempest* that it is hardly an exaggeration to describe the piece as a musical play, and one in which the part of Ariel must be played by an actor of no mean ability. An additional point for keen students of drama to notice is Shakespeare's clever use of the influence of music when handling the supernatural.¹

To place a final emphasis on the poet's own love and knowledge of music we may quote that exquisite passage from *The Merchant of Venice*, which he puts into the mouth of Lorenzo, a character of minor importance. Lorenzo is arranging that Portia's return home shall be welcomed by the musicians, who, we have learned, are part of the beautiful heiress's household.²

Lorenzo: Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.

[*Music.*

Jessica: I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

Lorenzo: The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,

¹ This subject is discussed in the author's work, *Shakespeare and the Supernatural*.

² See The Casket scene, III. ii.

Which is the hot condition of their blood;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music; therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.¹

For its value as entertainment, music was probably the most popular of the arts in the Elizabethan home, but rich men did not bestow their patronage solely, or even mainly, on musicians and composers. Poets, painters, and sculptors also enjoyed their support; and the great noble would find volumes of sonnets dedicated to him in effusive prefaces, and artists submitting their work in the hope of being commissioned to paint family portraits to adorn the walls of his resplendent mansion. Timon of Athens is Shakespeare's figure of the patron who enjoyed his position and was lavish in his awards to those who flattered him.

Pictures, especially of subjects from classical mythology, were much in favour. In the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Lord and his servants offer Christopher Sly a choice from the fine collection in the Lord's house:

¹ *Merchant of Venice*, v. i. 66-88, 98.

Second Servant: Dost thou love pictures? we will fetch thee straight

Adonis painted by a running brook,
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath,
Even as the waving sedges play with wind.

Lord: We'll show thee Io, as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled and surprised,
As lively painted as the deed was done.

Third Servant: Or Daphne roaming through a thorny wood,
Scratching her legs that one shall swear she bleeds,
And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep,
So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn.¹

Pictures were often protected by a curtain, a point we note in the inventory of Henry VIII's collection in 1542. Shakespeare has one or two references to this precaution. In *Twelfth Night*, alluding to Sir Andrew Aguecheek's unsuspected accomplishments, Sir Toby Belch asks:² "Wherefore are these things hid? wherefore have these gifts a curtain before 'em? are they like to take to dust, like Mistress Mall's picture?" Later in the same play Olivia, when unveiling to Viola, refers to the custom in the words, "We will draw the curtain and show you the picture."³ Again, Pandarus employs the same metaphor when bringing Cressida to Troilus: "Come, draw this curtain, and let's see your picture."⁴

Portrait-painting had long been popular among the English; and Henry VIII had taken the German artist, Hans Holbein, into his pay and thus provided posterity with a permanent likeness of himself. The practice of

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Ind. ii. 51-62.

² *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 133-5.

³ *Ibid.*, I. v. 251-2.

⁴ *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii. 49-50.

having their pictures painted, a practice that tickled the self-conceit of the high personages of the court, is recalled by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, where the Prince in Gertrude's closet tries to bring the sense of guilt home to his mother by comparing the poor portrait of the usurper, Claudius, with the fine figure of the murdered Hamlet.¹ Miniature portraits were also frequently commissioned. "Fair Portia's counterfeit"² in the leaden casket chosen by Bassanio is a miniature. So is the picture of Silvia hanging in her chamber, for which Proteus begs so earnestly, since Julia is able to study it in her hands.³ A miniature in a locket was known as a "medal."⁴

In a roll of New Year gifts to Queen Mary the following presents were included:

Two little round black tables, the one of the phisnomy of the Emperor and the King's Majesty, the other of the King of Bohemia and his wife.

A small picture of the Trinity.

A table painted with the Maundy.

A table painted, of the Woman of Samaria.

A table, with the picture of Christ and His Mother

A table painted of the Queen's Majesty's marriage.

The last-named was a gift from a painter. Presents to Queen Elizabeth from her household in 1561-2 included "a table painted in a frame of walnut-tree, and certain verses about it of money"; and "the Queen's person and other personages, in a box, finely painted." "Tables" was the name of the wooden panels on which pictures were then painted.

¹ III. iv.

² *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii. 115.

³ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. ii. 122.

⁴ *Winter's Tale*, I. ii. 307.

Sculpture found a welcome in the more magnificent homes; and the most important reference in Shakespeare is that to the supposed figure of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. Rumour reports this to be "a piece many years in doing, and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione, that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer."¹ Julio Romano, who was a disciple of Raphael, was more famous as a painter than a sculptor; and Shakespeare uses his name to denote the height to which artistic excellence had attained in the fields of painting and sculpture. Actually, in the play, the statue is not a sculpture, but Hermione herself, and the viewers note well the colour in her face and the red upon her lips. This did not lead them to suspect the truth, for it was customary in the sixteenth century to paint statues to give them a life-like appearance.

Shakespeare refers in *Cymbeline* to the sculptured chimney-piece in Imogen's bedroom:²

Chaste Dian bathing; never saw I figures
So likely to report themselves: the cutter
Was as another nature, dumb: outwent her,
Motion and breath left out.

Shakespeare fails to show us the same love and critical appreciation of painting and sculpture which are so evident in his references to music. He says enough, however, to suggest that they held an important place in the

¹ *Winter's Tale*, v. ii. 104-11.

² II. iv. 82-5.

lives and homes of the people, although their appeal was not as universal as music, of which so many were talented exponents.

This is not the place to dwell upon the magnificent literary achievements of the Elizabethan masters except to say that such an outcrop of genius is only possible in a nation whose educated classes as a whole devote much time and thought to literature. Books played an important rôle in the homes of the upper and middle classes, and nearly every cultured man and woman attempted to express themselves in prose or verse, more generally the latter. The improvising of delicate songs and lyrics was every gentleman's accomplishment. They might be somewhat crude like Orlando's, of small merit like those of the lovers in *Love's Labour's Lost*, or as delightful as Thurio's, "Who is Silvia? what is she?"¹ but few would care to confess with Benedick that he was not born under a rhyming planet.²

The writing of poetry must have been a pastime that whiled away many an idle hour, for William Webbe, describing the enormous increase in book sales, says in his *Discourse of English Poetry*:³ "Among the innumerable sorts of English books and infinite fardles of printed pamphlets, wherewith this country is pestered, all shops stuffed, and every study furnished: the greatest part, I think in any one kind, are such as are either mere poetical, or which tend in some respect (as either in matter or form) to poetry."

The educated taste for reading was by no means confined to poetry. The libraries which men of wealth were

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. II.

² *Much Ado*, V. II. 41.

³ 1586.

compiling included translations of the Scriptures, histories such as Holinshed's *Chronicles*, biographies such as Plutarch's *Lives* and Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*, novels such as Lodge's *Rosalynde*, works of the Greek and Latin poets in the original and translations, Boccaccio's *Decameron Nights* and other Italian masterpieces, French writings, as well as manuals of etiquette, books of riddles, and a host of other publications, filling in an ever-growing stream the shelves of the booksellers. Women, we have seen, read as assiduously as men, in English as well as in classical and foreign tongues. Ophelia, Bianca, and other Shakespearean women were booklovers. The library of the wealthy Timon is specifically mentioned. Prospero was a scholar devoted to his books. Titus Andronicus's bookshelves included Ovid, Cicero, and other Latins. Hamlet was a wide reader. All these characters reveal the love of literature among the educated Elizabethans.

Books were often splendidly bound and illustrated, although it must be admitted that on the whole the English printing trade lagged behind that of certain foreign countries. Some of the most handsome volumes found in English studies came from Italy, France, or Spain. Lady Capulet, an Italian, when urging upon Juliet the desirability of Paris as a husband, remarks:¹

Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;
Examine every married lineament,
And see how one another lends content;
And what obscured in this fair volume lies
Find written in the margent of his eyes.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iii. 81-92.

This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
To beautify him, only lacks a cover . . .
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.

Books figured largely in the presents given to the Queen and her predecessor, Mary, and included volumes bound in black, purple, or green "vellat," red leather, or parchment. Among Elizabeth's gifts appears "a Bible covered with cloth of gold, garnished with silver and gilt, and two plates with the Royal Arms."

Coming to dramatic literature, we find that plays, though often pirated, were not written to be printed, but to be performed; and it is clear that a permanent record of his dramas in book form was the last thing Shakespeare contemplated when at work upon his scripts. Players, in order to avoid arrest as vagabonds, had to seek the protection either of the sovereign or some great noble, who added them to their army of retainers. Plays were drawing an increasing proportion of the townspeople to the public theatres, but command performances took place in one or other of the royal palaces and in the princely mansions, where a company of players would make their customary contribution to the festivities. Though bearing their patron's name, a company of actors and associated musicians would not be debarred from offering their services elsewhere. They did not perform exclusively for their master. As in *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the players would approach the master of a great house and ask for permission to give their performance, relying upon his bounty for their reward, a bounty that was in most cases on a generous scale. When a professional company was not available, the local folk, as in

A Midsummer Night's Dream and *Love's Labour's Lost*, or the servants themselves shouldered the responsibility of entertaining their master.

More popular than the play for home entertainment was the masque. In the earlier form of masque the performers would go in procession to the nobleman's house, accompanied by their many torch-bearers. They wore vizards, or masks, over their faces, and costumes often of an elaborate kind, their bright colours intelligently chosen to produce a striking effect. The piece was acted in dumb show, its essential feature being the dancing. Later, scenery on an ambitious scale was introduced, and speaking parts in rhyme were given to the actors, who were sometimes personifications of the virtues, as in the old morality play, and sometimes mythological characters, supernatural beings, peoples of strange nations, or other bizarre creatures. The appetite for these masques at Court and among the nobles was so voracious that men of the highest literary attainments were engaged upon them. Ben Jonson composed several masques of a most lavish and spectacular kind, with ingenious scenery and costly dresses, for the delight of King James and his courtiers. Dancing, however, remained the most prominent and important part of the entertainment.

The widespread love of masques is evidenced by Shakespeare in the many scenes in his plays in which masquers are introduced. In *Love's Labour's Lost* Navarre and his friends appear before the Princess of France and her ladies masked and dressed in Russian habits, their accompanying musicians attired as Blackamoors. In *Romeo and Juliet* Benvolio arranges a masquing party to dance at Capulet's celebrations. In *Much Ado*

About Nothing Don Pedro and the gentlemen enter, after the great supper at Leonato's house, as "maskers with a drum."¹ In *Timon of Athens* following the banquet in the great hall, Cupid enters with a masque of ladies dressed as Amazons, with lutes in their hands, dancing and playing.² There is the occasion of Henry VIII's arrival at Wolsey's banquet, when he and his companions enter, "as masquers, habited like shepherds";³ and Bassanio promises Shylock a masque when he entertains him to supper. The dramatist pandered to the love of masquing and pageantry by introducing episodes into his plays, which had no dramatic significance and no other purpose than to amuse after this popular fashion. Instances of this concession are the masque in *The Tempest*⁴ and the vision of the angels in *Henry VIII*.⁵

Masques, plays, and interludes were reserved for special occasions; and everyday amusements were of a less elaborate kind. The chief of outdoor pastimes were hunting and hawking, but bowls, wrestling, and tennis also claimed many devotees. Other sports which had their following of enthusiasts were fishing, fencing, football, shooting, and swimming, the last-named, curiously enough, an unlawful sport and under the same interdict as cards and dicing. In Tudor days the English did not originate games, perfect themselves in them, and then teach them to others. Most sporting exercises were imported, with other customs and ideas, from France, Italy, or Spain.

It is with the games played indoors that we are more concerned here. Bowls was played in a closed alley as

¹ II. i.

³ *Henry VIII*, I. iv. S.D.

² I. ii.

⁴ IV. i.

⁵ IV. ii.

well as on the lawn outside; and, it appears, women players were as keen as men. In *Richard II* the unhappy Queen and her ladies are in the Duke of York's garden at Langley, when the following conversation takes place:¹

Queen: What sport shall we devise here in this garden,
To drive away the heavy thoughts of care?

Lady: Madame, we'll play at bowls.

A game which was somewhat similar to bowls, but played with small logs, was loggats. It is mentioned by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*.² "Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em?" Hamlet asks Yorick's skull. Boys, it seems, used bones for the game instead of wooden pins. Ninepins was played in various forms, and two kinds were popular under the names of kayles and cloish. Kayle pins were later called kittle-pins, which later still passed into our word "skittles."³ Quoits was another favoured pastime; and Falstaff tells Doll Tearsheet that one of the reasons why Prince Hal is such good friends with Poin is that he "plays at quoits well."⁴ Billiards, one of the games which had come to England from Spain, was played both by men and women. Shakespeare rather startles us by suggesting that billiards was one of the favourite amusements of Cleopatra.⁵

The Elizabethans were inveterate gamblers, and by far the most popular of indoor pastimes, among the men at least, were dice and card games. A pack was then known

¹ III. iv. 1-3.

² v. i. 100.

³ A. Forbes Sieveking in *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 466.

⁴ 2 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 266.

⁵ *Antony and Cleopatra*, II. v. 3.

as a "pair of cards," though "deck" and "bunch" were other common terms. Shakespeare writes in *Henry VI*, Part III,¹

Alas, that Warwick had no more forecast,
But, whiles he thought to steal the single ten,
The king was silyly finger'd from the deck.

Card games were as popular at Court as they were in other homes in the land. Henry VIII's skill and delight in primero are a matter of history and were repeated in a lesser degree in Elizabeth. Primero, which was more like poker than any game we have now, gave gamblers the opportunities they sought to win, or lose, large amounts. Falstaff remarks ruefully, "I never prospered since I forswore myself at primero."² There were many other card games, mostly of the gambling variety, with strange names such as maw, gleek, and trump or ruff, which had their hosts of followers.

Dicing gave authors many a metaphor for chance fortune, risk, and ill luck. It appealed to the gambling instinct even more than cards, and large sums must have changed hands in Shakespeare's time on the die or throw of the dice. The poet's references to dicing are very numerous; and among the most interesting is his use of the word "hazard." To-day hazard is a common enough word in the language with a settled meaning which is universally understood. Originally, however, it was but the name of a game of dice. Other games were mum-chance, apparently played in strict silence, and novum and tray-trip, both mentioned in Shakespeare's plays.³

¹ v. i. 42-4.

² *Merry Wives*, iv. v. 103-4.

³ See *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 547, and *Twelfth Night*, ii. v. 208.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*¹ we come across the following outburst from Pistol:

Let vultures gripe thy guts! for gourd and fullam holds,
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor:
Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,
Base Phrygian Turk!

Gourd and fullam were species of false dice, Fulham, apparently, being the place where loaded dice were manufactured. "Tester" was the slang for sixpence.

Draughts, chess, and backgammon, then known as "tables," were well to the fore even in those days. Indeed, the last two were very ancient games and far antedated our period. An indoor pastime which appealed to the women was troll-my-dames, or trou-dame, mentioned by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale*.² It was a kind of bagatelle and consisted of rolling a ball along a board, through arches, and into eleven holes at the other end. A variation of the game, sometimes played on the ground, was nine-holes, in which each of the holes had a different scoring value.

A game of which we hear much in Shakespeare was the favourite shovel-board. In this a coin was flicked by the hand along a polished surface into compartments at the other end. The coin usually employed was a shilling, hence we get Falstaff's order to Bardolph to throw out the turbulent Pistol, "Quoit (pitch) him down, like a shove-groat shilling."³ In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Slender declares that Pistol and his friends have picked his pocket and stolen "seven groats in mill-sixpences and two Edward shovel-boards."⁴ In other words, Slender

¹ I. iii. 94-7.

² 2 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 207.

³ IV. iii. 92.

⁴ I. i. 158-9.

has lost some of the new sixpences, the first milled money in England, and two Edward VI shillings. These Edward coins were particularly broad, and, being worn smooth by age and use, were much in demand by devotees of shovel-board.

Of children's games, merels, a variety of hopscotch, was a source of much fun, as was cherrypit, which consisted of throwing cherry stones into a pit or hole.¹ The see-saw was known as "Wild Mare"; and "draw-gloves," a very old game, was a race to see who could take off their gloves most quickly. Blind man's buff was called hoodman-blind.² Tops, leap-frog, and chasing games named base and prisoner's base and barley-break or last-in-hell, in which "home" played an important part, were responsible for shrieks of childish joy. In *Romeo and Juliet*³ we come across the line, "If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire." This is an allusion to the very old game, Dun-in-the-mire. A log of wood is supposed to represent Dun the cart-horse, who is stuck in the mud. Dun has to be helped out, and the game consists of trying to drop the log on somebody else's toes.

Of other childish games, hot-cockles consisted of one player being blindfolded, while the others struck him, a punishment he endured until he guessed correctly the name of the striker; push-pin⁴ was an attempt, by turns, to push one's pin across that of one's opponent; blow-point was probably blowing an arrow through a tube at some mark or target; and dust-point was merely laying points or laces in the dust and aiming stones at them.⁵

¹ See *Twelfth Night*, III. iv. 129.

² See *Hamlet*, III. iv. 77.

³ I. iv. 41.

⁴ *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. 169.

⁵ See A. Forbes Sieveking in *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 481-2.

Tudor children appear to have had a good selection of games to choose from, and perhaps experienced less difficulty than our own in keeping themselves amused.

The Elizabethans were far more dependent for their entertainment and recreation on home resources than we are to-day, but he would be a rash man who asserted that we get more fun out of life than they did.

CHAPTER VIII

HOME CUSTOMS

IN addition to the home duties and home entertainments we have mentioned, there were certain interesting Tudor customs observed in connection with events of outstanding importance. Chief of these events were those great landmarks in the human life: birth, marriage, and death.

It would be absurd to say that in these enlightened twentieth-century days superstition was dead, shattered by progress, discovery, and education. Superstition still lives, but it is a sickly child compared with the energetic tyrant who influenced almost every phase of existence for the Elizabethans. Theirs was an age when astrologers were honoured more than astronomers, when even sovereigns would have their horoscopes read, and when the fate of every child was, according to firm conviction, regulated by the star under which it was born. It was an age when few doubted the existence of fairies, the appearance of ghosts, and the potential power for evil that possessed witches. King James himself discussed with all gravity the curious preference of the devil for working only through old hags, and inspired a persecution of these unfortunate women which was carried to the limits of cruelty. This widespread belief in, and fear of, the occult was responsible for many of the strange customs which Shakespeare's contemporaries observed with such strict fidelity.¹

¹ For a complete discussion of this subject, see the author's work, *Shakespeare and the Supernatural*.

When a birth was imminent, the lying-in chamber of a woman of quality was prepared with all the magnificence that the growing luxury of the times had made possible. Receptions were held in the bedroom, and even card-parties, and friends and relations brought the presents expected of them—all of which was considered necessary to ensure the mother's recovery. When the midwife was engaged, she was sometimes required to take an oath that she would not resort to incantation nor employ any kind of sorcery in the course of her duties.

In *Shakespeare's England*,¹ Percy Macquoid quotes from Robert Herrick's *Hesperides*² the following advice to the credulous midwife:

Let the superstitious wife
Near the child's heart lay a knife;
Point be up and haft be down,
(While she gossips in the town:)
This, 'mongst other mystic charms,
Keeps the sleeping child from harms.

The christening ceremony was as elaborate as the position of the child's parents could make it. The baptism of a royal infant was a particularly impressive spectacle, as Shakespeare and Fletcher show us at the naming of Princess Elizabeth in the last scene of *Henry VIII*. The stage directions read: "Enter Trumpets, sounding; then two Aldermen, Lord Mayor, Garter, Cranmer, Duke of Norfolk with his marshal's staff, two Noblemen bearing great standing-bowls for the christening gifts, then four Noblemen bearing a canopy, under which the Duchess of Norfolk, godmother, bearing the child richly habited in a mantle, etc., train borne by a

¹ ii. 142-3.

² 1648



AT THE CHILD BED

(From a woodcut in the Series of Satirical Prints entitled "Tittle-Tattle, or the several branches of Gossiping.")

Lady: then follows the Marchioness Dorset, the other godmother, and Ladies."

Some ceremonies were even more splendid. It is recorded that at the christening of James I's daughter, Princess Mary, the font was silver-gilt, worked in all kinds of imagery.¹ On some occasions the church would be hung throughout with the magnificent new tapestries, which all wealthy people were collecting in great numbers.

The standing-bowls mentioned in the above stage direction were the large, gold or silver, decorative cups which were placed on the tables at great banquets. The favourite gifts for godparents were apostle spoons. "Come, come, my lord, you'd spare your spoons,"² laughs King Henry, when Cranmer hesitates to accept the honour of standing sponsor to the little princess. A wealthy man like the Archbishop might be expected to give his royal godchild a complete set of the spoons. Others, less blessed with riches, might be content with one, the chosen spoon representing the patron saint of the month in which the child was born. The metal from which these spoons were made differed according to the rank of the giver, inferior materials being used for the spoons figuring in lower-class christenings. Other gifts to the child would include cups, cradles, sometimes made of oak and delightfully carved, and bedclothes and hangings. One common gift, for which superstition was responsible, was the silver-mounted coral with bells, which was supposed to defend the babe against witchcraft and the evil eye.³

After the christening a white robe was put on the child

¹ Stow's *Chronicle*.

² *Henry VIII*, v. iii. 167-8.

³ *Shakespeare's England* (Macquoid), II. 143.

as a token of its innocence. This was known as the chrisom. If the child died within a month of being baptized, the chrisom was used as its shroud. In describing Falstaff's death, Mistress Quickly says, "'A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any christom child.'"¹

The Elizabethans would find a place in any ceremony for eating and drinking, and after the priest had concluded his solemn address to the godparents, wine and food were brought in for all guests and relations present. It was customary to pass a drink made of ale, sugar, and roasted crab-apples from hand to hand, which was known as the gossip's bowl, and to which Shakespeare refers more than once.² The original meaning of "gossip" was sponsor or godparent; from that it came to mean anyone present at a christening function, and finally a talkative individual. In many cases an elaborate christening banquet would end the proceedings.

In regard to marriage, customs and ideas differed in several important respects compared with the usage to-day. In the first place much more was made of the betrothal. Before the Reformation a betrothal ceremony was legally insisted upon, and even in Shakespeare's day a ceremony, though of a different kind, existed. In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia, in love with Sebastian, says to him, as she indicates the priest who accompanies her:³

Now go with me and with this holy man
Into the chantry by: there, before him,
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith.

¹ *Henry V*, II. iii. 11-12.

² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II. i. 47, and *Romeo and Juliet*, III. v. 175.

³ IV. iii. 23-6.

And when the confusion between the disguised Viola and Sebastian arises, Olivia appeals to the priest for confirmation of the solemn betrothal. He tells here there has been—

A contract of eternal bond of love,
Confirm'd by mutual joinder of your hands,
Attested by the holy close of lips,
Strengthen'd by interchangement of your rings;
And all the ceremony of this compact
Seal'd in my function, by my testimony.¹

Betrothal-rings play an important part in Shakespeare's plots. The rings given by Portia and Nerissa to their lovers, Bassanio and Gratiano, are responsible for the fun in the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*. The interchange of rings between Proteus and Julia is a far-reaching incident in the story of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. There are Imogen's ring, Helena's ring, and several others. Rings were of many kinds, an interesting specimen being the joint-ring, to which Shakespeare alludes in *Othello*.² This unusual ring consisted of two hoops, hinged together in such a way that they could be separated; and on betrothal each party took a hoop, set with its own stone, and wore it until the wedding-day. The two hoops were then once more united to form the wedding-ring. Wedding-rings were set with jewels, wrought in many shapes, and often engraved with mottoes. The plain gold circle, now universally favoured, was a Puritan innovation and came later.

In Shakespeare's day an engaged couple could be first united by mutual contract, which was followed, some-

¹ *Twelfth Night*, v. i. 159-64.

² iv. iii. 73.

times at a considerable interval, by the religious ceremony. After the civil contract and before the church marriage the man and woman could cohabit and any children born were legitimate. The wife, however, could not claim her dowry until the union had been blessed by the Church. Shakespeare has such a situation in *Measure for Measure*. Claudio says:¹

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
 I got possession of Julietta's bed:
 You know the lady; she is fast my wife,
 Save that we do the denunciation lack
 Of outward order: this we came not to,
 Only for propagation of a dower
 Remaining in the coffer of her friends.

The Puritans condemned cohabitation until the full religious rites had been performed. Shakespeare does not appear to be in sympathy with so strict a rule at the time of writing the foregoing passage. Towards the end of his life, however, when he was engaged upon *The Tempest*, his opinions have evidently veered round to the Puritan point of view. On giving his consent to the betrothal of his daughter, Miranda, to Prince Ferdinand, Prospero says:²

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
 All sanctimonious ceremonies may
 With full and holy rite be minister'd,
 No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
 To make this contract grow.

The pre-contract, as the marriage preceding the religious ceremony was called, was a legal marriage in

¹ 1. ii. 149-55.

² *Tempest*, IV. i. 15-19.

itself, and anyone so bound who married another, though it were in church, was guilty of committing bigamy. Often a bridegroom was required to state on oath that no pre-contract existed. In *Measure for Measure*, when the Duke urges Mariana to replace Isabella in the assignation with Angelo, he reassures her:¹

Gentle daughter, fear you not at all.
He is your husband on a pre-contract:
To bring you thus together, 'tis no sin.

When the wedding-day dawned, it was the convention for the bridegroom to go to his father-in-law's house and wake his bride from slumber. For this purpose he was accompanied by his friends and musicians responsible for the serenading. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Laurence arranges that when Paris performs this right on his bridal morn, he shall find his Juliet to all appearances lifeless:²

Now when the bridegroom in the morning comes
To rouse thee from thy bed, then thou art dead.

After obtaining his licence, which at 11s. 3d.³ was considerably more expensive than a licence to-day, the bridegroom might be conducted to church by the bridesmaids along a path strewn with flowers and rushes. He would carry a bunch of rosemary, emblematical of manly qualities, which would have been tied with ribbons and presented to him beforehand. "Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin both with a letter?" asks the Nurse slyly of Juliet.⁴ The bride would follow, escorted into church by two bachelors, and accompanied by relations, friends,

¹ IV. i. 71-3.

³ The price in 1586.

² IV. i. 107-8.

⁴ *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 220.

musicians, maidens, and a large throng of onlookers and well-wishers.

The bridal dress is a most interesting feature of every wedding-ceremony. An Elizabethan bride wore her hair hanging down her back and crowned with a wreath of flowers or wheat-ears. Her dress, not necessarily a brand-new one, would probably be white, but perhaps russet. The most distinctive part of her attire would be the favours of coloured ribbon tied in true-lovers' knots. These were supposed to represent the strong and binding ties between the contracting parties, and were stitched on to the bodice, sleeves, and skirt by way of trimming. The bride had to be careful in her choice of colours for these favours. Gold would suggest that she was avaricious, flesh-colour that she was lascivious, green that she was wanton. Blue, red, peach, orange, tawny, flame, and milk-white were the popular selections.¹ A pair of gloves was another essential item, since these, after being supplemented, were presented after the ceremony to her escorting bachelors and other of the wedding guests.

In reply to Ophelia's remark, "Still better, and worse," Hamlet says, "So you must take your husbands"²; and the marriage service was, of course, that laid down in the newly introduced Prayer Book. But the conclusion was strangely different from our procedure. Immediately afterwards—often before the bride had had time to leave the altar rails—all the young men dashed forward and began to pluck the favours of coloured ribbon off her wedding-dress, as well as depriving the lady of her garters. These were also of ribbon, the conventional colours being blue and yellow, to represent honour and

¹ *The Fifteen Comforts of Marriage.*

² *Hamlet*, III. ii. 261-2.

joy.¹ The favours were then distributed among the wedding guests, who wore them in their hats, sometimes for as long as a fortnight afterwards.

In most churches was kept a mazer bowl—a bowl, that is, made of maple or other hard wood, perhaps ornamented and rimmed with silver and gold. This was filled with muscatel, in which cakes were soaked. The wine was then drunk by bride and bridegroom and members of the party. It will be remembered how the eccentric behaviour of Petruchio at his wedding with Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew* gravely shocked those present, not excluding his own servant. When it came to the mazer bowl, he—

quaff'd off the muscadel
And threw the sops all in the sexton's face; . . .
This done, he took the bride about the neck
And kiss'd her lips with such a clamorous smack
That at the parting all the church did echo.²

Not everybody could afford muscatel. At weddings among the poorer classes a sweetened, warm, spiced ale was substituted. This was known as bride-ale, and our word "bridal" is derived from it. Sometimes a poor bride would sell the bride-ale for anything her friends would give her for it. At weddings of this class, Macquoid writes, "a basin was put in the church on a table to receive the presents of the invited guests."³

With the conclusion of the church ceremony the bride was conducted with joy and music to her own home, which had been gaily decorated with flowers and sweetly perfumed. In wealthy households the resulting

¹ *Shakespeare's England* (Macquoid), ii. 146.

² iii. ii. 174-81.

³ *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 148.

festivities might last for a fortnight. Theseus says of the celebrations attendant upon his marriage to Hippolyta:¹

A fortnight hold we this solemnity
In nightly revels and new jollity.

Feasting, music, dancing, masques, and interludes always marked the celebration of nuptials among the wealthy. Capulet's extensive preparations for Juliet's wedding to Paris and Baptista's provision for his daughters are two instances in Shakespeare where such an important event is appropriately signalized. Petruchio causes consternation by refusing to remain for the wedding-breakfast and insisting that his wife shall proceed with him at once to his country home. There, it seems, his servants have received a new rig-out to mark the occasion,² a not uncommon practice. The wedding-feasts of the less happily placed were necessarily on a much more modest scale, but, according to Harrison, the amount of meat and food consumed was prodigious, every guest bringing with him his contribution to the table.

The superstition against May marriages, which still persists, was strongly held by the Elizabethans. It dates back to Roman times, when May was the month for remembering the unhappy dead and, therefore, considered inappropriate for joyous nuptials. April and November appear to have been the popular marriage months in Shakespeare's England.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the dramatist notices the old custom, more Italian than English, of burying prospective

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. i. 376-7.

² *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i. 49-51.

brides, who died before their wedding-day, in their best attire. Says Friar Laurence to Juliet:¹

Then, as the manner of our country is,
In thy best robes uncover'd on the bier
Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault
Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.

The Friar refers to Juliet's "best robes," not to her wedding-dress, for the trousseau was not a Tudor custom and, except for the coloured favours, women wore for their bridals the best in their existing wardrobes. We see both Juliet² and Hero³ discussing with their dependents which costumes they shall wear to the altar.

Death, sombre enough at all times, brings a shudder of terror to superstitious believers in the power of devils, ghosts, and evil influences. All the solemn rites offering salvation for the soul of the dead and protection for the living were scrupulously observed by the Elizabethans. What these rites were we learn from illuminating passages in Shakespeare's plays. When the news of Juliet's sudden and tragic end on the eve of her wedding reaches her father, he issues the mournful commands:⁴

All things that we ordained festival,
Turn from their office to black funeral:
Our instruments to melancholy bells;
Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast;
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change;
Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,
And all things change them to the contrary.

¹ IV. i. 109-12. ² *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. ii. 33-5, and IV. iii. 1.

³ *Much Ado*, III. i. 102-3, and III. iv. 6-23.

⁴ *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. v. 84-90.

Again, in *Titus Andronicus*, the sinful Tamora is to be deprived of all ceremony at her burial:¹

No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weeds,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial.

When a death occurred in a wealthy household, the staircase and principal rooms were heavily draped in black cloth. "Hung be the heavens with black" is the opening sentence of *Henry VI*, as the funeral of the late king, Harry the Fifth, comes upon the stage. (The "heavens" in this case means the upper part of the stage, for which it was the technical term.) Mourning was worn for a year by the deceased's relations, and black, as now, was the correct choice. Hamlet in his inky cloak is the most notable of Shakespeare's mourning figures, but we see also the bereaved family of Rousillon,² the fatherless Princess of France of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Olivia sorrowing for a brother,³ Henry V's mourners,⁴ Lady Anne of Warwick, dutifully following the bier of her father-in-law, Henry VI,⁵ and others in their garments of sorrow. According to O. L. Hatcher,⁶ the mourning dress for women consisted of "a strip of white linen, with crosswise tucks in the middle, fastened to the hair and meeting under the chin. Connected with this a kerchief of square white muslin and a veil of white or black over the head."

A curious custom was the mourning bed. After a death, the head, or surviving head, of a family occupied for the proper number of days a black bed, on which he lay

¹ v. III. 196-7.

² *Twelfth Night*.

³ *Richard III*.

⁴ *All's Well*, I. i.

⁵ *Henry VI*, I. i.

⁶ *Shakespeare's Plays and Pageants*.

while people came to express their condolences. This bed was not a permanent part of the furniture of a house, but a family possession which was handed from home to home as it was needed, together with the curtains and carpets which went with it.

There were no hearses as we know them. Shakespeare uses the word hearse to denote a coffin carried on a bier.¹ It was only the rich who could afford a coffin. The poor were buried wrapped in a cerecloth or winding sheet. Coffins were enveloped in black cloth, and bunches of yew and rosemary, emblems of sorrow and immortality, were placed on top. Friar Laurence calls over Juliet's body, "Dry up your tears and stick your rosemary on this fair corse."² Branches of rosemary, bay, and other evergreens were also carried by the mourners, who threw them into the grave after the body was lowered.

A long procession of mourners was considered requisite for the funeral of a great man. Sometimes people were hired for the purpose and clothed in black caps and gowns. It was not unusual for provision to be made in a will to pay a hundred or more poor people to follow the testator to his grave. Chanting choirmen and funeral dirges mixed with loud lamentations were held a decorous expression of grief. If the deceased was a member of a guild or college, the pall belonging to the institution, often a rich and much ornamented affair, would be lent for the occasion and held aloft over the bier.

The habit of strewing a grave with flowers is illustrated by Shakespeare in *Cymbeline*. Imogen, disguised as

¹ *Richard III*, I. ii. 1-2.

² *Romeo and Juliet*, IV. v. 79-80.

"Fidele," is believed dead, and the sorrowful Arviragus promises:¹

With fairest flowers,
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor
The azured harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine . . .
Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,
To winter-ground² thy corse.

And later Belarius adds his contribution:³

Here's a few flowers, but 'bout midnight more;
The herbs that have on them cold dew o' the night
Are strewings fitt'st for graves.

The case of Ophelia's death in *Hamlet* is the most interesting reference in Shakespeare to the burial customs of his day. According to the coroner, Ophelia has committed suicide in a state of mind in which she was not responsible for her actions. The verdict entitles her to burial in consecrated ground, though the gravediggers argue that if she had been a poor person, this would have been denied her. The Church incline to their point of view; and while the priests dare not run counter to the wishes of the king, they only accord the unhappy girl a part of the rites to which she would ordinarily be entitled. On catching sight of the *cortège* Hamlet at once realizes the position:⁴

The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life.

¹ IV. ii. 218-29.

³ IV. ii. 283-5.

² Protect from wintry weather.

⁴ *Hamlet*, V. i. 241-4.

Ophelia's brother, Laertes, is indignant at the curtailed ceremony, and asks if more is not to be done. The priest answers him:¹

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty: her death was doubtful;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

Laertes: Must there no more be done?

Priest: No more be done:

We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

The virgin crants were garlands carried before a maiden's coffin and after the funeral hung up in the church. The maiden strewments were the scattering over the grave of flowers emblematic of purity.

Laertes has also grave cause for complaint about the manner of his father's funeral. For political reasons the body of the murdered Polonius was hurriedly disposed of, and the son is bitter over the lack of respect shown to one who, after all, held a high position in the State. He calls in question

his obscure funeral,
No trophy; sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble right nor formal ostentation.²

When a man of high rank was buried in church, much

¹ v. i. 249-61.

² *Hamlet*, IV. v. 212-14.

ceremony was observed, and his helmet, sword, gauntlet, spurs, and coat were hung over the tomb. By "hatchment" Laertes means an armorial escutcheon.

The funeral feast is a very ancient institution and was strictly observed by the Elizabethans. It consisted of many dishes of cold meats with appropriate wines and ale. Hamlet, sarcastic about the speed with which his mother's remarriage followed the funeral of his father, says,¹

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked-meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Sometimes these feasts would extend for many days. Dancing was not excluded, and drunkenness was only too often witnessed. It was not unknown for men to bequeath a considerable sum of money to cover the cost of their own burial feast; but poor people, who attended the passing of one of their number, would take their food contribution with them.

Most of the other singular customs of the period were connected with the great festivals and anniversaries of the Church. The customs themselves, however, were derived from ancient pagan celebrations, for which the Church invented a Christian meaning, when it found itself unable to suppress them. The Christmas festival, merged with the old Saturnalia feast of the Romans, appropriated the custom of decorating the house with evergreens. With the Elizabethans it was a long and joyous occasion, lasting from Christmas Eve to Twelfth Night, when the Lord of Misrule was enthroned, and feasting, dancing, and playing the fool were heartily indulged in by all classes of society.

¹ *Hamlet*, I. ii. 180-1.

The morris-dancing on May-day and at Whitsun, the Whitsun-ale or parochial picnic, and the habitual performance of the mystery plays at Chester and elsewhere, the tramp to the woods on St. John's or Midsummer's Eve for the branches with which the homes were decked, the girls' midsummer vigil for a glimpse of their future husbands, the eating of the Michaelmas goose, and the watch on Hallow-e'en, the Witches' Night—all these were observed by the superstitious people of Shakespeare's England with the strange traditional rites handed down to them by their forefathers.

CHAPTER IX

COSTUME

THE title of this chapter sets forth the one topic of home interest remaining to be discussed. It was a topic second to none in its claim upon the time, money, and interest of every Tudor household. Dress played so important a part in the lives of all except the poorest class of Elizabeth's subjects that it is impossible to treat it exhaustively within the limits of a single chapter. A whole book is necessary to do justice to the theme.¹ Here only a general survey will be attempted.

Several influences combined to make the Elizabethan era a notable one in the history of English costume. In the first place there was the growing wealth of the country, which enabled the people with money to indulge their luxurious tastes and purchase the expensive cloths, furs, and velvets which the merchants were importing from the Continent in ever-increasing volume. Secondly, there was the growing habit of foreign travel, which brought the young dandies of England in touch with the leaders of fashion in other lands, particularly in Italy. Modes and vogues then required the recommendation of Italy as to-day they need the indorsement of Paris. Thirdly, the efforts of the aristocracy to uphold by law the class distinctions in dress having largely failed, a great step forward towards complete democratic freedom in this important department of life was taken.

Shakespeare has much to tell us in his plays about the

¹ See the author's book, *Shakespeare and Costume*.

prevailing fashions. Costume played a prominent part in play-production. On a stage where scenery consisted only of curtains and a few crude properties, it was costume which was relied upon to give life and colour to the setting and to appeal to the eye of the audience. Shakespeare's plays were clothed in what was to the players modern dress. These players, moreover, were reasonably safe guides to the latest styles; and Puritan critics added to their scathing denunciations of the profession a severe censure on the luxury of their apparel.¹ Even men who were tolerant of the theatre considered that the sight of actors strutting about in ermine, embroidered coats, crowns, coronets, and decorations was apt to make the nobility look ridiculous.² The reason the actors were able to cut such magnificent figures on the boards was that their patron lords would generously pass on to them items of clothing which they no longer needed.

Nowadays it is our habit to suggest—somewhat erroneously—that the love of dress is peculiar to women, and that men adopt a lofty and careless attitude toward the matter. Such an observation could not possibly be applied to the Elizabethans. It would be difficult to say who were the most ardent followers of fashion, the men or the women. Certainly, in the splendour and brilliance of their dress, their eagerness for anything new, and their anxiety not to be outshone by their rivals, the men were no whit behind, but rather in front of, their women-folk. With both sexes taking so keen an interest in their clothes, it was inevitable that the expenditure on this

¹ See *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem* (Thomas Nashe).

² *Reliquiae Wottonianae* (Sir Henry Wotton).

item should be out of all proportion to the money spent on other necessities of life, and that writers should condemn many for appearing to care little whether there was sufficient food in the house so long as they could cut a dash out-of-doors. There is no doubt that some people dressed far above their station; but with all classes of the community sharing in the increasing prosperity, it was futile to try to prevent more humble folk from aping their betters and freeing themselves from the old feudal restrictions.

The custom of playing the unrivalled dramas of Shakespeare in Elizabethan costume has made us more familiar with the fashions of his period than those of almost any other. We recognize in the male doublet and hose, the female farthingale or crinoline, and the ruff worn by both sexes, the main distinctive features of the clothes of Shakespeare's day.

Rich materials and bright colours were the rule for the doublet. It was a jacket which fitted close to the figure, and though its shape and cut altered from time to time, it was, in the main, buttoned from neck to waist, quilted and stuffed with bombast, fitted with tight sleeves puffed at the shoulders, and surmounted at the neck by a high close collar edged with a frill.¹ The Queen, who liked display, encouraged her courtiers to choose fabrics thickly embroidered in gold thread, silks, satins, taffetas, and velvets, with sable, marten, and other expensive furs as trimming. The doublet itself was made without sleeves like the modern waistcoat, and the sleeves, the shapes of which changed according to the whims of fashion, were often of different material and fastened to the body

¹ See Macquoid in *Shakespeare's England*, ii. 92.

with "points" or ribbons with metal tags. A variant was to wear the doublet with a V-shaped opening at the neck, displaying an embroidered vest beneath.

Hose had a somewhat different meaning in the Elizabethan costume vocabulary to the one we attach to them to-day. Commonly the word comprised both breeches and stockings, which were originally joined together in one garment. The two articles became separated during our period, and the new word for independent stockings was stocks. There were various patterns of hose in favour and various names to distinguish them. Generally speaking, if the breeches were the short, puffed variety, coming half-way down the thigh, and the stockings extended all the way up the leg to meet them, they were known as trunk hose and trunks. When the breeches extended to the knee and the stockings were just long enough to join them, they were called upper stocks and nether stocks.¹ The short trunk-hose were stuffed and padded, and the more they stood out, the smarter they were considered. In their enthusiasm well-dressed men carried these stuffed hose to such exaggerated widths that legislation had to be introduced to control them. There was an amusing incident of a man prosecuted under this law for wearing hose of excessive compass. When charged, he drew from inside his breeches a pair of sheets, two tablecloths, ten napkins, four shirts, a brush, a glass, a comb, night-caps, and other articles, explaining that he found his hose the safest of all store-houses for his goods.² His plea caused the case against him to collapse in laughter.

Trunk-hose were often what was called "paned,"

¹ *English Costume* (Calthrop). ² *Notes on Dress*, Harleian MS.

that is, the outer material was slashed to show a sumptuous lining underneath. It was usual for these garments to have a tubular extension to the knee over which the long stockings could be drawn and tied to the breeches with tagged laces. Some of these short hose were tight instead of full, and "ruffled in puffs about the thighs."¹ This fashion was known as French hose or round hose.

Venetian hose or upper stocks were long breeches that extended below the knee to the gartering-place of the leg, where they were finely tied with silk ribbons.² These long hose were much worn, though less popular than the more showy trunk-hose. Very full breeches reaching almost to the knee and elaborately ornamented were a third variety known as gally-hose or slops. Hose in general were made of silk, velvet, satin, damask, or other costly materials; and it was not uncommon for a man of fashion to pay as much as a hundred pounds for a really fine pair. Stockings for men were usually of silk, and their colours included white, peach, flame, yellow, and many other vivid hues. Gartering the stockings about the knee had to be done neatly or it would make the same impression as a slovenly bow tie in modern evening dress. It was the pride of the young man with a fine leg on him that he could dispense with garters, but not many cared to risk this boast. Malvolio's cross-gartering—that is, gartering both above and below the knee—was considered somewhat eccentric.

Short cloaks of silk, satin, or velvet, brilliant in colour, handsomely lined, and trimmed with lace, were worn over the doublet. They were fastened to each shoulder

¹ *English Costume* (Calthrop).

² *Anatomie of Abuses* (Stubbes).

and tied about the neck, reaching down to the hip. It was bad form to appear in public without a cape or cloak surmounting the doublet. Older and graver men wore a long gown with hanging sleeves, which fitted in at the waist and covered the trunk-hose. A jerkin was a leather coat, which was worn over the doublet and under the cloak or gown for greater warmth or protection. It fitted very closely over the doublet and as a rule had no sleeves. Hats for men were of many shapes and sizes, fashioned from velvet and other soft materials, and gorgeously trimmed with fur and feathers. Boots were long and reached above the knee, with tops that were often extravagantly embroidered. They fitted closely to the leg. Men's shoes were very dainty affairs. They could be made of ox-leather or velvet of white, green, and other colours. They were high-heeled, decorated with buckles of silver or gilt, and surmounted with shoe-roses or rosettes of silk or satin.

The most distinctive article of Elizabethan dress, common both to men and women, was the ruff. The fashion came from France, where Catherine de Medici introduced it on the occasion of her wedding to Henry II,¹ in the shape of a pleated linen neck ruffle. England was not slow to imitate the new vogue, and in its small and simple form it continued to be worn up to the accession of Elizabeth. Ruffs were made of cambric, lawn, lace, and other fine materials, and remained of moderate size until a new idea reached England from Holland. This was the secret of starching, which gave the fashion experts the power to extend the ruff to dimensions which it had never previously reached. Already, in 1562, it was found

¹ 1533.

necessary to curb by legislation the temptation to increase ruffs to ridiculous proportions, and for some fifteen years this was effective in compelling a desirable moderation. But fashion is a law unto herself, and she tired of the small neckbands of about three inches wide and two inches thick. Once she had burst through the legislative restrictions, she ran riot, and huge cart-wheel ruffs of monstrous measurements became the rage and were known as the French ruff. These preposterous giant ruffs had indeed first made their appearance at the Court of France, where the courtiers of Henry III were so trussed that they could hardly move their heads and found great difficulty in eating and drinking. Starch, however cleverly used, could not of itself hold up these huge cambric and linen neckwear, and a rabato or underprop of wire and holland was necessary to support them. Over this foundation was placed with care the delicate neckerchief set in tubular plaits and smart with lace trimmings and fine points. The plaits were set with "putting-sticks" made of iron, brass, or steel, and heated in a fire for the purpose. Shakespeare mentions these domestic articles in *The Winter's Tale*,¹ where Autolycus has "poking-sticks of steel" among his wares.

During James I's reign ruffs were enormous. One practice was to dye them yellow with saffron, a foible that so annoyed the Dean of Westminster that he tried, though unsuccessfully, to prevent men and women wearing such ruffs from attending divine service in the Abbey. Nor was the Dean alone in his censure. Some of the satirists lashed with scorn the absurd lengths to which certain ultra-fashionable people had gone. Philip Stubbes,

¹ IV. iv. 228.

a master of stinging comment, lampooned the wearers of these "great ruffs or neckerchers made of holland, lawn, cambric, and such cloth," so delicate that the greatest thread in them "shall not be so big as the least hair that is," starched, streaked, dried, patted, and underpropped by the supertasses, "the stately arches of pride," sometimes overshadowed by three or four orders of minor ruffs placed one beneath the other in graduating sizes, and all under "the master-devil," ruff which was itself edged with gold, silver, or silk lace, wrought all over with needlework, and sewn with sparkling devices representing the sun, moon, and stars.¹ Writing in 1595, this same critic says, "They have now newly found out a more monstrous kind of ruff, of twelve, yea, sixteen lengths apiece, set three or four times double; and is of some fitly called 'three steps and a half to the gallows.'"² But despite all censure and ridicule, the women, led by the Queen, continued this eccentric, uncomfortable, and not very becoming garniture.

The male ruff did not reach the cartwheel proportions of the female species, though it was high enough and stiff enough to be anything but pleasant wearing. Accompanying the neck ruff, men wore small editions of it round the wrists. A tailor of St. James's named Higgins opened a shop to cope with the growing demand for these articles. He gave the name of "picadillies" to his wares; and Piccadilly became the name of the street in which his shop was situated.

In the pictures of Good Queen Bess and other Elizabethan portraits the second outstanding feature of women's costume is the vastly distended skirt or

¹ *Anatomie of Abuses.*

² *Ibid.*

farthingale. Describing this original and distinctive garment, Percy Macquoid writes,¹ "The farthingale was a round petticoat made of canvas distended with whalebone, cane hoops, or steel strips; it was covered with taffeta or other material, the brocade, cloth, or velvet skirts being worn over this. During the latter part of the century it was enormously enlarged at the hips and called a cart-wheel farthingale, the circumference of the skirt being as wide at the hips as at the hem. At times a huge frill like a ruff headed the skirt, forming a flat circular surface projecting at right angles to the waist. Farthingales were also made in semicircular form, confined to the back of the skirt, leaving the front straight, and so giving more freedom and a more graceful appearance."

Attempts were made in France to check the ever-widening farthingale, which had been invented originally in Spain and imported by the French, who developed from it their own semicircular pattern. But French women, it seems, took little notice of the proscriptive decree, while in England, Elizabeth, herself a lover of fashion, led the way in adopting all the latest absurdities in the growth of the crinoline. The size of the garment showed no more tendency to moderation under her successor, James, despite the fact that he was so annoyed by these spreading skirts that he issued a proclamation forbidding anyone in a farthingale to witness a masque or entertainment at his palace on the ground that "this impertinent garment took up all the room at his court." Unfortunately for James, his wife, Queen Anne, was as much interested in dress as Elizabeth had been, which is doubtless the reason why the king's proclamation had so

¹ *Shakespeare's England*, II. 94-5.

little effect. Nevertheless, the proclamation deserves our sympathy. When the very chairs of the period had to be made without arms to enable the women to sit down at all, we realize what a gentle tyranny these capacious skirts exercised over certain aspects of home life.

Women squeezed the top part of the body into a tight-fitting bodice, the corresponding garment to the male doublet. Elizabeth introduced the whalebone and buckram stays, which were worn under the bodice and laced as tightly as the Victorian ladies imprisoned their figures. Many of Shakespeare's women characters under stress of emotion beg the bystanders to "cut my lace." Fastened to the bodice and stretching from the breast to below the hips and down on to the farthingale was the stomacher. This was a garment which usually terminated in a long point, and was elaborately ornamented with jewels, silver and trimmings. Sleeves were of many shapes and sizes and continually altering. Some were tight and straight and cut and slashed: others, of somewhat later date, were puffed, "padded and stiffened with embroidery, and often profusely sewn with jewels."¹ Hanging sleeves, some of them reaching to the ground, were an end-of-the-century affectation.

Another important article in the female wardrobe was the kirtle. This was a jacket with a skirt attached, and the gown or over-dress was often parted from the waist downwards to reveal the skirt portion. The skirt without the bodice was known as a half-kirtle. Kirtles were of silk, velvet, or other handsome material, and sometimes extensively trimmed with lace. By the country-folk and for ordinary occasions they were worn in preference to

¹ *Shakespeare's England* (Macquoid), ii. 95.

the farthingale, than which they were less stiff and much less bulky. Over their dresses women wore voluminous cloaks, most of them sleeveless, and very full at the back, with a collar support for the ruff. Brocades were largely used in their making.

A new hat is an important matter of feminine interest in all circumstances, and the women of Shakespeare's time appear to have been no less extravagant than the rest of their kindred where this attractive item of dress was concerned. Stubbes aims one of his poisoned shafts against the sin of spending more than one can afford at the hat-shop. "To such excess is it grown," he says,¹ "as every artificer's wife (almost) will not stick to go in her hat of velvet every day, every merchant's wife and mean gentlewoman in her French hood, and every poor cottage daughter in her taffeta hat, or else of wool at least, well lined with silk, velvet, or taffeta. But how they come by this they care not; who payeth for it, they regard not." The small, tight-fitting cap, banded in front with rolls of gold and coloured tissues, and with a fall at the back down to the shoulders, was called a quoif. For out-of-doors, the French hood, first introduced by Anne Boleyn, was worn over this. Ladies of position wore a flat cap of velvet and the finest lawn edged with wire lace.

Women were particular about their shoes and stockings. The first pair of silk stockings, of black, were worn by the Queen in 1560, to whom they had been presented by Mistress Montague. Other ladies of fashion were not slow to follow suit; and Stubbes scolds his countrywomen severely for spending as much on their stockings as would formerly have clothed them from

¹ *Anatomie of Abuses.*

head to foot. Women's shoes were made of leather, cloth, or silk, and of a colour to match their dresses. The smartest kind were of velvet. The popular shape had a slightly pointed toe. The heels as a rule were low and made of cork. Rosettes were much favoured. The conditions of the streets, where the filth was often ankle deep, made it impossible for women to go out in their richly embroidered shoes without some protection. The rule, therefore, was to slip on clogs, or "chopines," as they were called, which completely covered the dainty shoe and were fitted with high heels to raise the foot above the mud. For riding, hunting, and hawking, women wore buskins, which were long, high-heeled boots similar to those worn by the men.

Warm, woollen underclothing was not known among the Elizabethans; fur-lined coats and mantles and thickly quilted doublets were relied upon to keep out the cold. Under their doublets men wore a linen shirt; and in bitter weather they would put on one shirt over another until they were adequately protected, just as the women increased the number of their petticoats for the same purpose. Even wealthy women apparently wore only a thin chemise under the petticoat, trusting to their solidly constructed stays and the soft linings of their outer garments to keep them warm.

We may be misled by Shakespeare's frequent use of the word nightgown into thinking that nightshirts and nightdresses were in common use in his day. That was not so. By "nightgown" the poet always intends the garment we now call a dressing-gown. We gather so much from the remark of Lady Macbeth's gentlewoman, who explains to the doctor how she has seen her mistress,

while fast asleep, "rise from her bed" and "throw her nightgown upon her."¹ Some of these dressing-gowns were made of velvet and thickly lined with fur. Nightgowns proper were called "night-rails." We read that in 1588 a certain Mrs. Wingfield presented the Queen with "a night-rail of fine cambric wrought all over with black silk." Very few indeed, however, possessed night-rails; and most people, it seems, slept in their smocks—in their nethermost undergarment, that is to say—when, indeed, they slept in anything at all. Pretending to speak of Beatrice, Leonato says,² "She'll be up twenty times a night; and there she will sit in her smock till she have writ a sheet of paper." The wearing of night-caps appears to have been general, and Shakespeare tells us that the crowd threw up their night-caps in acclamation of Caesar.³

We can touch only briefly upon one or two other common items of clothing. One important innovation, a challenge to the ruff, was the falling collar, which won increasing popularity with men who did not aim to be the "glass of fashion." According to the most authentic portraits, Shakespeare himself apparently had a preference for this new mode.

Scarfs were particularly popular with women, though worn by men as well. Stubbes dubbed them "flags of pride," and said that women must always have scarves fluttering about their faces with great tassels of gold, silver, or silk at each end. Mufflers, soft, thin, and light in colour, were used to cover the lower part of the face. A silk "lace" or neck-tie, known as tawdry-

¹ *Macbeth*, v. i. 5.

² *Much Ado*, II. iii. 136-8.

³ *Julius Caesar*, I. ii. 247.

lace, was favoured by many women. "Tawdry" is a corruption of St. Audrey, who died from a tumour in the throat, an end she attributed to the sin of wearing pretty necklaces when she was a girl.

Fans, made of feathers, were introduced from Italy and became a necessity to any lady of quality. There were silk and velvet fans, as well as those of swan's down and ostrich plumes, and nearly all kinds were expensive. The most common shape was circular, and many had mirrors in the centre, as well as long, ornate, bejewelled handles. Fans were either worn suspended from the waist by a gold chain, or carried by an attendant. Gloves were of great variety and figured prominently in male and female attire. Some were gauntleted with backs that were lavishly embroidered and cuffs hung with silken tassels: others were fur-lined. Perfumed gloves were a craze of the moment which came from fashionable Italy. Handkerchiefs were universally carried, and Shakespeare's description of Desdemona's handkerchief "spotted with strawberries"¹ gives an idea of how they were worked.

Jewellery of all kinds was much in demand. There were not only the betrothal and wedding-rings we have mentioned, but seal-rings, memorial rings, heirlooms, and rings that were the symbol of authority. Rings of gold, set with precious stones and engraved with arms or crest, were worn by the rich. Rings of silver, brass, and pewter performed a more humble office among the poor. Other jewellery glittered on shoes, garters, hats, stomachers, and on various parts of the body. Gold chains encircled the necks of most citizens of any con-

¹ *Othello*, III. iii. 435.

sequence; heart-shaped pendants, sometimes enclosing miniatures, won favour with the women. Bracelets, earrings, jewelled girdles, brooches, hairpins, and bodkins adorned the person. In addition there were pomanders or scent carriers, pouncet-boxes which were small perforated boxes for musk and other perfumes, and watches set with gems.

Few things are so characteristic of a period as the fashion in hairdressing. Men as a whole wore their hair long and made free use of the curling-tongues. Harrison says:¹ "I will say nothing of our heads, which sometimes are polled, sometimes curled, or suffered to grow at length like woman's locks, many times cut off, above or under the ears, round as by a wooden dish." Young men of fashion adopted the French touch of love-locks tied with ribbon and falling on to the shoulder. "The wealthy curled darlings of our nation," is Shakespeare's somewhat contemptuous reference to this piece of foppishness in *Othello*.² Almost every man wore a short beard and moustache. Sometimes they were somewhat fantastically trimmed, and the use of dye was fairly common. There were long beards, generally associated with churchmen, the spade or square and spreading kind, and, most popular of all, the short sharply pointed or stiletto cut. Shakespeare laughs at the strange colours chosen for beards in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where he makes Bottom discuss his make-up for the part of Pyramus in the interlude: "I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow."³

¹ *Description of England*.

² I. ii. 68.

³ I. ii. 95-8.

Women curled their hair and drew it back from the forehead over a pad or wires, the name for which was palisadoes. The hair was dressed high and thickly adorned with jewels. There was no hesitation about dyeing, and the popular colours were golden and auburn, the tints favoured by the Queen. Wigs were regularly worn by the older ladies as their own hair deteriorated.

Cosmetics, make-up, and perfumes were used freely by men, though more freely still by women. Stubbes says the women "colour their faces with certain oils, liquors, unguents, and waters made to that end, whereby they think their beauty is greatly decored." Most women were very afraid of sunburn, which with a blonde queen on the throne was considered a blemish, and wore masks of velvet when out-of-doors. Dark complexions and dark tresses were not admired; and the ambition of all English gentlewomen was a delicate, fair colouring, to which paint and cosmetics were a great aid. A quaint custom was to wear patches of velvet on the cheek. Men also followed this fashion, but in their case the patch often covered a scar won in battle or in a duel. For perfumes musk and civet were for the most part employed by the distillers of the day. Falstaff describes the dandies at Court as scented "like Bucklersbury in simple time."¹ Bucklersbury was the street in which the grocers and druggists were concentrated, and simple was a medicinal herb largely used in their perfumery. Many homes, however, made their own scents, as they did their medicines.

The details of costume we have considered refer

¹ *Merry Wives*, III. iii. 79.

naturally to the well-to-do classes and those with the money and opportunity to follow the dictates of fashion. Some of the expensive vogues introduced from Italy and France were out of reach of the lower orders. As Harrison and Stubbes tell us, many people spent far above their means in aping the dress eccentricities of their betters, but there was a large body of country-folk who had to be content with skirted fustian tunics, loose breeches, coarse stockings or canvas leggings, and woollen caps. Fustian was a coarse cloth made of cotton and flax. "Hempen-home-spuns"¹ is Shakespeare's name for the rustics, referring to the clothing made from hemp at the home spinning-wheels. At festival times the rural people bought ribbons and fripperies from the travelling pedlars, of whom Autolycus of *The Winter's Tale* is a typical example. As he goes his way, he cries his wares in song, and his goods are a catalogue of the sort of things that were worn on gala occasions.

Lawn as white as driven snow:
 Cypress² black as e'er was crow;
 Gloves as sweet as damask roses;
 Masks for faces and for noses.
 Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
 Perfume for a lady's chamber;
 Golden quoifs and stomachers,
 For my lads to give their dears;
 Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
 What maids lack from head to heel
 Come buy of me . . .³

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. i. 79.

² Crape.

³ *The Winter's Tale*, IV. iv. 220-32.

Later Autolycus sings again:

Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-a?
Any silk, any thread,
Any toys for your head,
Of the new'st and finest, finest wear-a?
Come to the pedlar;
Money's a medler.
That doth utter all men's ware-a.¹

We have now completed our survey of Elizabethan home life and have dealt with its main aspects. The subject is not only interesting in itself, but the knowledge of it helps us to fill in the background of the stage on which the characters of Shakespeare move, and to appreciate and understand more fully the works of a genius who had a deeper and more sympathetic comprehension of his fellow-beings than any poet who ever lived.

¹ *The Winter's Tale*, iv. iv. 322-30.

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